"Life at the Full": The Idea of the Natural in English and French Theatre, 1815-1848

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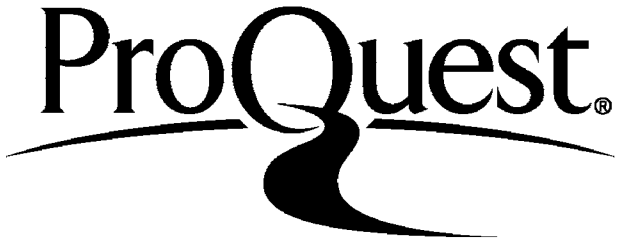

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NOTE

The factual material about the English Theatre's performances in Paris in 1827-28, mostly contained within Chapter 4 of this study, was used in part, in a different context and for a different purpose, in my study Fair Ophelia: A Life of Harriet Smithson Berlioz (Cambridge, 1982).

ABSTRACT

The study investigates the development of theatre in England and France between 1815 and 1848, concentrating on a number of attempts to create a serious and poetic dramatic experience which reflected the artistic concerns of the time. It examines the general state of theatre and drama in London and Paris, and takes particular note of the reactions of one country's critics to the productions of the other. The central issue discussed is the idea of the natural, especially in terms of acting style and mise en scène. The study analyses some of the efforts of authors and producers to reconcile the demands and potential of Romantic dramaturgy with the expectations of the audience. The crucial problem may be described, in Bulwer Lytton's terms, as the attempt to fuse the simple and the magnificent, or, alternatively, the natural and the theatrical.

The study outlines the organization, repertory, mise en scène and acting style in England and France at the start of the period (Chapters 1 and 2). It discusses the difficulties confronting the English Romantics as potential dramatists, with particular attention to Marino Faliero (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 describes the 1827-28 visit to Paris of the Théâtre-Anglais, specifically the impact of Shakespeare productions upon French critical consciousness. The effect of that impact is discussed with reference to selected productions of French Romantic drama (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 outlines the incidence and influence of French theatrical practice in London, emphasising the natural acting style of the comédiens and the high quality of mise en scène. Chapter 7 describes the growth in England of the idea of the unified production, and assesses the importance of Macready as a producer. In Chapter 8, the difficulty of achieving a satisfactory balance between the style of acting and the increasingly

elaborate physical context is examined, and it is argued that the idea of the natural was more capable of realisation in musical drama, especially ballet.

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INTRODUCTION

The English and French theatre in the Romantic age was prolific, flamboyant, varied and rich in invention. If work which has only more recently proved capable of stage realisation is included, such as The Cenci and Lorenzaccio, the achievement is formidable. Many dramatic works were only partially realised, or were produced in such a way as to obscure their full significance. The cavalier treatment of Marino Faliero, or Les Troyens, are conspicuous examples. The challenge presented to the theatre manager was acute. The constituents of this challenge - the developing physical means at his disposal, the pressure of the critics' and audiences' expectations, the imaginative impulse of the dramatist - give a context to the search for the natural.

Goethe's Faust, arguably the greatest and most resonant dramatic work of the age, might serve independently as a test for the capacity of the theatre to give physical form to the ideas and images of the time. Versions of Faust (Part 1) were presented in London at the Coburg (1824) and at Drury Lane (1825), in Paris at the Théâtre des Nouveautés (1827) and at the Porte-Saint-Martin (1828); the last provided a spectacular vehicle for Frédérick Lemaître as Mephistopheles (Fig.13) and for Marie Dorval as Marguerite, but it was for Lemaître's satanic laugh and a demonic waltz that the play achieved popular success, together with the element of spectacle, rather than for any profound interpretation of Goethe's poetic concepts.

Pueckler-Muskau has left a vivid description of the Porte-Saint-Martin Faust, which he saw early in 1829:

> "The culminating point of this melodrame is a waltz which Mephistopheles dances with Martha; and in truth it is impossible to dance more diabolically. It never fails to call forth thunders of applause, - and in one sense deserves it; for the pantomime is extremely expressive, and affects one in the same manner as jests intermingled with ghost stories. Mephistopheles, though ugly, has the air of a gentleman, which is more than can be said for our German devils.

> The most remarkable part of the scenery is the Blocksberg, with all its horrors, which leave those of the Wolf's Glen far behind. Illumined by lurid lights of all colours, gleaming from behind dark pines and clefts in the rock, it swarmed with living skeletons, horrible monsters of deformity, headless or bleeding bodies, hideous witches, huge fiery giants' eyes glaring out of bushes, toads as big as men, and many other agreeable images of the like kind. In the last act, the scene-painter had gone rather too far, having represented heaven and hell at the same time. Heaven, which of course occupied the upper part of the scene, shone with a very beautiful pale-blue radiance; but this was so unbecoming to the complexion of Gretchen's soul, as well as to that of the angels who pirouetted round her, that they looked more like the corpses on the Blocksberg than the blessed in heaven."[1]

The recognition of Faust as a mélodrame, and the suggestion that the pantomime in the waltz affected the spectator "in the same manner as jests intermingled with ghost stories" asserts the essentially popular and sensational emphasis of the interpretation; while the description of the theatrical effects draws attention both to the elaborate resources and to the difficulty of reconciling visual spectacle with dramatic conviction.

No-one was in a better position than Goethe, that unique combination of poet, philosopher and theatre director, to analyse the task confronting the dramatic poet in the Romantic age. In the "Prelude on the Stage", which stands in the complete version of Faust between the Dedication and the "Prologue in Heaven", the director, seconded by the clown (or in some translations the comedian), attempts to persuade the reluctant poet to provide him with a new work to please the crowd. The director's description of his requirements reads like any nineteenth century theatre manager's briefing to his house author:

> "Plenty of action, that's the first thing that's needed. People want to use their eyes, they want to see. If you keep the scene moving all the time, if you keep them staring and gaping, it's more than half the battle....Give them lots of stuff and you'll appeal to lots of people. Everyone will be free to make his choice....Whatever piece you do, do it in pieces. With a mixed grill

> you can't go wrong. It's easy to think up, easy to stage. If you present them with an artistic whole, what's the use? They'll only take it in snatches anyway."[2]

The general line of argument, for all Goethe's irony, is wholly consistent with the practice of Elliston or Bunn, Merle or Harel. Goethe's poet, instinctively recoiling from the "vulgar mob", demurs, claiming that what is being asked of him is unworthy of a true artist:

> "Do you expect a poet wantonly to trifle away his greatest gift, nature's gift to his humanity, merely to oblige you?"

The clown urges the poet to get to work with his pretty gift:

> "Try it on a love-story. You know how it goes. You meet someone, you feel something, you stick around, and bit by bit you get involved. You're all happiness and then trouble comes. First the rapture and then the misery, and before you know where you are you have a whole romance. Write us a play on these lines. But scoop it up out of real life, life at the full. Everybody lives it, few know it. And it's interesting, no matter where you scratch it. Variety, colour, confusion, error, and a grain of truth. That's the right brew, it suits everyone."[3]

That piece of apparently simple advice, "Scoop it up out of real life", proved a compelling temptation for the writers of dramas and melodramas; Fitzball's domestic drama Jonathan Bradford (Surrey Theatre, June 12th, 1833) was described in the playbill thus: "This original Drama is founded on REAL FACTS."[4] In the Faust "Prelude on the Stage" the poet begins to yield, while expressing a longing for the driving passion of his lost youth to be restored to him. But the director cuts short the debate with a call to action:

> "What's the good of talking about being in the mood or not in the mood. The mood never comes to those who hesitate. If you pretend to be poets make your poetry do what you tell it to do."

Finally, the director reminds the poet, and the reader, (assuming that even Goethe did not envisage the staging of the whole of Faust) as to the almost

limitless resources which the theatre of the time commended:

> "You know that in the German theatre each of us is free to experiment. Today you can be lavish with scenery and all the furnishings. You have sun and moon at your disposal and stars in plenty. Water, fire, rocks, beasts, birds - we're not short of any. So on this little stage of ours you can run through the whole of creation and with fair speed make your way from heaven through the world to hell."[5]

The very richness of both means and material - life at the full - exerts pressure on the dramatic poet. Characteristically, Goethe includes the figure of the clown within his debate, and hence, in a dynamic way, the crucial element of the audience, the people. The artistic question posed through the persona of the director is not simply a theoretical one, to be pursued at leisure in academic discussion, but a practical, urgent demand made in response to the "people streaming in crowds to the tent, thrusting in bursts like birthpangs through the narrow gate, and fighting their way to the box-office all in broad daylight at four in the afternoon or earlier."[6] Those crowds fighting their way to the box-office reflect a new and acute consciousness of the audience's power and the audience's needs. The director characterises their nature as softwood, rather than hardwood:

> "One of them comes because he's bored and another comes from gorging at the dinner-table. And, what is worse, quite a lot of them have just been reading the newspaper."[7]

Within the development of nineteenth century theatre there is a continuous awareness of the changing nature of the audience, which forms an insistent counterpoint to the more general artistic questions of dramatic form, acting style, mise en scène, and unity. Goethe, in this context at least, did not shrink from the implied responsibility:

> "If you pretend to be poets make your poetry do what you tell it to do."[8]

The challenge which Goethe articulated is the same challenge that

confronted Byron and Hugo, and a host of lesser writers. An anecdote from the last phase of Goethe's life in the theatre indicates the practical and frequently bizarre nature of the dilemmas arising from the need to reconcile the demands of the audience with the imperatives of artistic integrity. Goethe, as might be inferred from the Faust "Prelude on the Stage", was content to see a balanced programme in the Weimar theatre; but as the influence of the actress Karoline Jagemann, the Duke of Weimar's mistress, increased, so the non-literary element in the repertory became more prominent. In 1817 an actor called Karsten was touring Germany in a version of Pixérécourt's melodrama Le Chien de Montargis, Der Hund des Aubry de Mont-Didier, with the role of Dragon played by a poodle. Goethe felt strongly that this road-show should not pollute the Weimar theatre, and made some unguarded comments about resignation. Duke Karl August and Karoline Jagemann persisted in the arrangements, and Goethe travelled to Jena to remove himself from what he regarded as an act of sacrilege: as part of a lengthy series of disagreements and misunderstandings, he was deemed to have submitted his resignation, which was accepted. In terms of the "Prelude on the Stage", Goethe on this occasion followed the instincts of the poet; the typical nineteenth century theatre director would have stayed to count the box-office takings.

In accordance with Goethe's analysis of the German theatre, the theatres of England and France in the period between 1815 and 1848 experienced the urge to imitate "life at the full". There was an implicit confidence that the whole of creation could, and indeed should, be represented on the stage. Such an assumption had not been made for some two hundred years, since the conjunction, for example, of the scope of late medieval theatre and the dramaturgy of Shakespeare. But that drama never sought to be "lavish with scenery and all the furnishings", nor to recreate a mirror image of the world.

The theatre of the first half of the nineteenth century confronted the problems presented by a shift in the common understanding of the idea of the natural. For the first time, it seemed possible and desirable to construct a credible imitation of the world within a theatre; the modern, the historical and the natural world became the subjects and settings of drama, rather than the idealised world. The desirability of such an imitation was prompted by the same forces which provoked the French Revolution, and the social and political upheavals which succeeded it; and the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy did nothing to dispel the pressure for a re-definition of the nature mirrored by the theatre. The centrality of France's role in the events of the preceding period gave a sharpness and urgency to the French debate which is the more conspicuous for the contrasting amalgam of artistic compromise and economic issues which dominated English discussion. The French saw the process of re-definition in terms of a polarised battle, in which the engagement of Hernani was one incident within a lengthy campaign. (A characteristic English incident, though lying outside the period under consideration, is the O.P. rioting at Covent Garden in 1809.) Gautier's summarising comment is a reliable indication of the tone and spirit of the debate: "Dans l'armée Romantique comme dans l'armée d'Italie, tout le monde était jeune."[9]

This study examines the process of the re-definition of the idea of the natural in the development of English and French theatre between 1815 and 1848, especially in the contacts and relationship between the two theatres. In the context of theatrical representation, the process involved the definition of a dramatic text; the physical realisation of that text, and especially the development of the concept of mise en scène; and the style of acting which was considered appropriate to convey the dramatic idea.

The dates require a note of explanation. 1815 inaugurates a period

when relationships between French and English theatre could be resumed, and therefore serves as a convenient starting-point for a discussion of Romantic theatre. The choice of 1848, though resonant in the political context, is more arbitrary. Other dates and events suggest themselves. In France, the failure of Hugo's Les Burgraves in 1843 is sometimes taken as signalling the end of the movement in Romantic drama, a rebuff more marked because of the triumphant début of Rachel as Phèdre earlier in the year at the Théâtre Français. In England, during the same year, Macready gave up the struggle to present a national drama at Drury Lane, and his diary entry for June 16th indicates the passing of an era:

> "I passed round the scene-rooms and saw all put away in the best order. I could have wept to think of all those efforts and expenditure come to nothing! I desired Jones to give up the theatre to Dunn. I could not bear to look at it again. Came home dejected to the last degree."10

There is little positive achievement during the following five years to record or comment upon, within the general context of Romantic theatre. A number of events, however, make some useful contributions to an analysis of the aims and accomplishments of the period. Among them are the reactions to Macready and Helen Faucit during their Paris engagement in the winter of 1844-45; the ballet of Esmeralda at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1844; and the 1847 opera season at Covent Garden (re-opened on April 6th, 1847 as the Royal Italian Opera House) which included productions of Verdi's I Due Foscari and Ernani, which might be interpreted as confirmation that the Romantic drama was only realisable, for the age, in the form of opera. In 1848, two episodes occurred at Drury Lane, each with a French connection, which seem to signify the end of an era. The first involved a production of Dumas' two night epic, Monte Cristo. The actors were given an exceptionally hostile demonstration, largely instigated by leading members of the English stage; only Macready behaved with generosity and dignity, and his letter to the company regretting the "disreputable"

proceedings brought the threat of legal action from Charles Kean, Charles Mathews and their colleagues. The incident, trivial enough in itself, reveals the continuing insularity and narrowness of the English theatre. The second is indicative of the lost opportunities with which the period abounds. Berlioz had been engaged as conductor at Drury Lane by the impresario Jullien, in his "capacity of indisputable and undisputed lunatic".[11] During 1848 Berlioz conducted Donizetti's Linda di Chamonix, and The Marriage of Figaro; he was preparing a "Musical Shakespeare Night" for Covent Garden; and, for Drury Lane, a production of Mephistopheles, a stage adaptation of his own La Damnation de Faust. The bankruptcy of Jullien put an end to both the engagement and the production. The "freedom to experiment" which Goethe invoked, the drama of "real life, life at the full", proved incapable of realisation in the conditions of the time.

Yet if the theatre was unable to respond to the grandest or most radical visions, the period is one of abounding vitality. The intense critical scrutiny which dramatic literature and theatrical production received is an indication that the theatre's potential was widely recognized. In acting style, in mise en scène, in the material out of which drama, in the widest sense, was fashioned, the period from 1815 to 1848 reflected a conviction that the theatrical experience required re-definition in the same way that the nature of painting or the art of the novel was undergoing a transformation. It is the tension between this impetus towards re-definition and the constraints of the mixed and public art of the theatre which forms the subject of the following investigation.

INTRODUCTION : NOTES

1. Hermann L.H. Pueckler-Muskau, Fürst von, Tour in England, Ireland, and France, in the years 1828 and 1829 .... In a series of letters. By a German Prince. 4 vols. London, 1832. Vol.2, pp.276-7.
2. This and the following quotations are taken from Goethe's Faust, translated by Barker Fairley, Toronto, 1970, p.3. The first reference to a work is given in full; successive references are to a short title.
3. Faust, p.4.
4. Playbill, June 18th, 1833, British Library. Fitzball's attitude to the subject-matter and form of the legitimate drama is of relevance: "Everything dramatic, that is moral, interesting, and amusing to the public, is the legitimate drama, whether it be illuminated with blue fire, or in one act, or in twenty." Edward Fitzball, Thirty-five years of a dramatic author's life. 2 vols. London, 1859. Vol.1, p.107.
5. Faust, p.5.
6. Faust, p.3.
7. Faust, p.4.
8. Faust, p.5.
9. Théophile Gautier, Histoire du Romantisme. Paris, 1874, p.11.
10. William Toynbee (ed.), The Diaries of William Charles Macready, 1833-1851. 2 vols. London, 1912. Vol.2, p.214.
11. The Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns. London, 1970. p.552.

Chapter 1

ENGLISH THEATRE AND THE ART OF ACTING, 1815-1827

The period which followed the war against Napoleon marks at best stasis, at worst slow decline, in the quality of the English legitimate theatre. Odell named 1817-1837 the "leaderless age".[1] Yet it is paradoxically one which provided a context for three major acting talents and styles. Indeed, the development of the art of acting can be regarded as the major achievement of the Georgian theatre, though advances in scene-painting, lighting and stage machinery may be thought to hold more importance for the future. Surprisingly, the emphasis on acting coincided with a dearth of contemporary plays of any note. The repertory leaned heavily, so far as serious drama was concerned, upon Shakespeare, and upon imitations of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, of which Knowles' Virginius may be taken as representative. Even the Shakespearean element of the standard repertory requires careful qualification, since all his plays were subject to drastic cuts and emendations, or to musical elaboration - "the maulings of Frederick Reynolds"[2] - in the case of comedies, though the slow process of textual restoration had at least begun.

In comedy, as in melodrama, the two London patent houses were heavily dependent on adaptations from the French, and on plays which imitated eighteenth century models, where weight of sentiment out-balanced finesse of language. These latter plays (for instance, Kenney's Raising the Wind) were robust, entertaining, and technically proficient; but they lacked consistency and sharpness of wit, verbal polish, and either insight into, or criticism of, contemporary society. They tended to farce, rather than to comedy. Theatre-going was not predominantly an intellectual pleasure. The public longed, or was believed to long, for novelty and spectacle; and

the economic pressures of running the huge and costly patent theatres led their managers to attempt to satisfy those longings. One consequence of the policies pursued by managers like Elliston and Bunn was the abandonment of Covent Garden and Drury Lane by the more fastidious - a phenomenon especially noticeable to visitors from France or Germany: "The most striking thing to a foreigner in English theatres is the unheard of coarseness and brutality of the audience. The consequence of this is that the higher and more civilized classes go only to the Italian opera and very rarely visit their national theatre. English freedom here degenerates into the rudest licence, and it is not uncommon, in the midst of the most affecting part of a tragedy...to hear some coarse expression shouted from the galleries in a stentor voice."[3] The contrast with France, and the carefully delineated repertories, and hence audiences, of the Paris theatres during this period, was particularly marked. The lack of decorum in the audience was a source of anxiety to English critics and commentators. When Macready became manager of Covent Garden, he made strenuous and successful efforts to limit the activities of the prostitutes who used the theatre as a place of assignation. It was not, however, a simple matter of public morality, but part of the complex relationship between play, performance and public. Scott, searching for a solution to the national drama's state of depression, proposed the following:

> "If, however, it were possible so to arrange interests, that the patents of the present theatres should cover four, or even six, of smaller size, dedicated to the same purpose, we conceive that more good actors would be found, and more good plays written; and, as a necessary consequence, that good society would attend the theatre in sufficient numbers to enforce respect to decency."[4]

Scott blamed the degeneracy of the national drama on the monopoly possessed by Covent Garden and Drury Lane, on the size of the theatre buildings themselves, on the consequent emphasis upon spectacle, and on the

degraded taste of the spectators. His analysis of the problem, and his concept of the role of decoration, is worth noting, in view of the scenic developments to come:

> "The first inconvenience arises from the great size of the theatres, which has rendered them unfit for the legitimate purposes of the drama. The persons of the performers are, in these huge circles, so much diminished, that nothing short of the mask and buskin could render them distinctly visible to the audience. Show and machinery have, therefore, usurped the place of tragic poetry; and the author is compelled to address himself to the eyes, not to the understanding and feelings of the spectators.
>
> .....Besides, all attempts at decoration, beyond what the decorum of the piece requires, must end in paltry puppet-show exhibition. The talents of the scene-painter and mechanist cannot, owing to the very nature of the stage, make battles, sieges etc. any thing but objects of ridicule."[5]

Scott is here voicing a conservative, classical attitude to scenic decoration; that it should be subservient, suggestive rather than explicit, an imitation rather than a reproduction. His became, at least temporarily, a minority view. It was assumed that the scene-painter and the mechanist could change the nature of the stage, and give reality to anything that might be reproduced upon it.

English theatrical journals consistently deplored the debasement of the national theatres, and the failure of the English Romantic writers to contribute to the repertory was noted and regretted at the time, in marked contrast to the theatrical ambitions of a later generation of French Romantics. The reasons are numerous and complex, and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, with particular reference to Byron. The chaotic and, for authors, highly unsatisfactory laws of copyright were a major disincentive, as was the equally irrational monopoly on legitimate drama exercised by Covent Garden and Drury Lane. Nevertheless, there were frequent appeals throughout the period to writers of "superior talents" to offer their services and so nourish audiences presented otherwise only with

"an eternal turreen of monstrosity, glitter, and balderdash".[6] Elliston himself launched a campaign to persuade the most respected writers to provide him with plays. Both Scott and Thomas Moore refused his overtures, and although Leigh Hunt's tragedy on the Cid was accepted, and Keats' Otho, both were later withdrawn. Shelley, though not as enthusiastic a theatre-goer as Byron - "being of such fastidious taste that he was easily disgusted by the bad filling-up of the inferior parts" - certainly conceived The Cenci with a view to stage performance, and arranged for it to be submitted to Covent Garden in 1819. With a sure sense of casting, he intended Beatrice to be acted by Miss O'Neill, and would have wished for Kean to play opposite her, though he realised that this was impossible since Kean was under contract to Drury Lane. Shelley, however, must surely have realised that the treatment of incest would have prevented the play's being licensed for performance; Harris, the Covent Garden manager, certainly found the theme too objectionable to contemplate, even when handled so discreetly. Coleridge's Remorse in 1813 had a brief success, but never became established in the repertory. Only Byron's Werner enjoyed an extended life, and that fact owed far more to the performance of Macready (and later Phelps and Irving) in the title role than to the play's innate quality.

While agreeing with Scott, and the generality of theatrical criticism, both as to the degeneracy of the drama and the reasons behind it, Edward Bulwer Lytton's analysis, which forms a section of his broad survey England and the English,[7] adopts a much more buoyant and forward-looking tone. To begin with, he places the difficulties experienced by the English theatre within a wider perspective, considering that the decline of the drama was a European trend:

> "But everywhere throughout Europe the glory of the theatre is beginning to grow dim, as if there were certain arts in the world which blaze, and have their day, and then

> die off in silence and darkness, like an extinguished volcano."

The French theatre, though subsidised, was degenerate: "The French authors have started a new era in Art, by putting an end to Nature. They now try only to write something eccentric." Bulwer Lytton used as his prime example of degeneracy La Tour de Nesle, and concluded: "The French Theatre is wretched; it has been made the field for the two schools to fight in, and the combatants have left all their dead bodies on the stage." Bulwer Lytton's comments take us into the first phase of French Romantic drama. It is worth noting how dismissive English critics were about the more extreme examples of this school. Thackeray wrote in similar terms to Bulwer Lytton. Macready, at a later date, though he had much in common with writers such as Alfred de Vigny and George Sand, was generally unsympathetic to Romantic drama. During his visit to Paris in 1844, he caught up with a play which had helped to further the Romantic cause in 1830: "Paris, December 11 - Alexandre Dumas called and left a box for the Odéon. We went and saw his play of Christine - poor old Mlle Georges, quite an old woman, acted Christine. So dull a play I scarcely ever saw."[8]

If the plays of the leading Romantic writers had little impact on English drama, the same could not be said of such genres as melodrama, farce and vaudeville. The English theatre of the post-war period was blatantly derivative.

> "If the French Theatre lives upon murders, the English exists upon robberies; it steals every thing it can lay its hands upon; today it filches a French farce, tomorrow it becomes sacrilegious, and commits a burglary on the Bible. The most honest of our writers turn up their noses at the rogues who steal from foreigners, and with a spirit of lofty patriotism confine their robberies to the literature of their own country."[9]

Bulwer Lytton objected both to the pillaging of plots from Fletcher or Shirley, and to the wholesale plagiarism of language. Some of the reasons for the deterioration in the quality of drama he ascribes to the laws

respecting copyright, and to the monopolies of the two large theatres: his Dramatic Authors Bill to give authors more protection received the royal assent on June 10th, 1833, and he is hopeful that a second, to encourage competition between the theatres, will have the same good fortune. But he remains doubtful as to whether these measures alone will bring success: "The public being once spoiled by show, it is not easy to bring them back to a patient love of chaste composition." Unfashionably, he promotes the merits of "the magnificent tragedies of Byron", to which he devotes a major part of his section on Literature, and "the stern and terrible conception of the Cenci", though recognizing they do not comply with the "taste of the day". He also observes that "the greater proportion of prose fictions" have been "written by the dramatic rules, rather than the epic, and evince an amplitude of talent for the stage, had their authors been encouraged so to apply it".[10]

Bulwer's radicalism, however, prompts him to discover more fundamental reasons for the neglect and deterioration of the theatre, and he focusses briefly on the exclusion of politics from the stage. Whereas "theatrical performance was to the Athenian a newspaper as well as a play. We banish the Political from the stage of the most vivid of its actual sources of interest." The public mind is absorbed in politics, but "To see our modern plays, you would imagine there were no politicians among us."[11]

Accepting that the censor will be retained, Bulwer searches for a way forward, and suggests "two sources from which we should now seek the tragic influence, viz. the Simple and the Magnificent".[12] The Simple may be found in "tales of a household nature, that find their echo in the hearts of the people" - such as the story of Jeannie Deans. Originally, Bulwer argues, the "personages of tragedy were rightly taken from the great", since "Emotions were supposed to be more tragic in proportion as the station of their victims was elevated."[13] But, he continues, almost in the

manner of a French critic such as Stendhal, "we have now learnt another faith in the actual world, and to that faith, if we desire to interest the spectator, we must appeal upon the stage." The Kings, Princesses and Generals must give way to the People. Perhaps fearing he has travelled too far along the path of representation, Bulwer adds a footnote with some illuminating examples: "I grant that the stage must not only represent but ennoble Nature - its likenesses must be spiritualized; but this it can effect equally from whatever grade its characters are drawn. Clarissa Harlowe is taken from the middle ranks - could the character of any queen have been more spiritualized?" His two further examples of "nature ennobled" are Goldsmith's Country Clergyman and Goethe's Faust.[14]

If the Simple was to provide the source material for modern tragedy, its means of expression were to be sought in the Magnificent. "Let the dramatist effect, then, what Voltaire did under a similar passion of the public, and marry the scenic pomp 'To immortal verse'."[15] The sister arts should be made allies "subservient to the one great art" - this elevation of drama is unusual for Bulwer's age, and reflects his sense of the unfulfilled potential of the form. He calls for a "gorgeousness of effect" to be made instrumental "to the achievements of tragedy itself" instead of being wasted on spectacle or melodrama. Bulwer the aspiring Romantic again recalls the fervid prose of Dumas as he conjures up the images which stage machinery and scene-painting can help the artist to summon upon the Stage: "The gorgeous Ind with her mighty forests, and glittering spires; 'Fanatic Egypt and her priests'; the stern superstitions of the North - its wizard pine glens....whatever Nature hath created, whatever history hath bequeathed, whatever fancy can devise -"[16] By citing Byron and Scott, Goethe and Schiller, Bulwer suggests the kind of synthesis he seeks, for all "took the germ of a popular impulse, and breathed into it a finished and glorious life".[17] The modern materials are to hand: a play like The

(Fig. 1)
Maid and the Magpie, and "the decorations of an almost pantomimic melodrama", waiting to be transformed by a true poet.

Bulwer's analysis of the state of the drama is of particular interest since it comes from someone who involved himself energetically in the legal and administrative aspects of the theatre, and who would himself make the transition from writing prose fiction to writing for the stage. His thesis is convincing, and sets out clearly the central artistic problem of the age. The stage seemed capable of presenting everything which existed, human or natural, indeed everything which could be imagined; but in the effort to achieve realistic physical form, the element of the poetic was stifled. The emphasis fell on the amazing, the terrifying, the sensational, the new; and for some years there was no theatre and no manager in London to stand out against the general tendency. Bulwer's strictures to the effect that "the two large theatres, having once gorged the public with show, have rendered themselves unfit for dignified comedy and sober entertainments, because they have created a public unfit to relish them"[18] has some force. In place of the highly structured, and arguably over-restrictive, organization of the Paris theatre, where each genre had its stipulated venue and company, London laboured under the forced and increasingly false distinction between the patent houses and the illegitimate theatres licensed only for "burletta", a term susceptible to infinite definitions but principally embracing forms of melodrama and pantomime. As the years passed and economic pressures increased, the repertories increasingly resembled each other, to the detriment of the legitimate and serious drama; Drury Lane and Covent Garden competed with each other, and collectively against the minor theatres. The following examples demonstrate both the nature of this satiating competition, and the widespread dependence of the English repertory upon French models. According to Allardyce Nicoll, "Fully one half of the plays written between

1800 and 1850 must have been suggested by French models..."[19]

Bulwer Lytton's chief example of the Simple, The Maid and the Magpie, was first produced in London in a version by Arnold at the Lyceum on August 28th, 1815, and noticed favourably by Hazlitt in the Examiner of September 3rd. (The prototype was La Pie Voleuse, ou La servante de Palaiseau, by Caigniez and T. Baudoin d'Aubigny, Porte-Saint-Martin, 29.4.15.) The Lyceum version was swiftly followed by Drury Lane on September 12th with The Magpie, or the Maid of Palaiseau in a version by Thomas Dibdin (acted 39 times according to Genest) and by Covent Garden on September 15th as The Magpie or the Maid? by Isaac Pocock (acted 27 times). (Rossini used the same source for La gazza ladra in 1817.) Pixérécourt's melodrama Le chien de Montargis, ou La forêt de Bondy (Théâtre de la Gaîeté, 18.6.14) was seen the same year as The Dog of Montargis at Covent Garden, adapted by Barrymore (30.9.1814), and at the Royal Coburg, adapted by T. Dibdin (6.10.1814). The same author's Valentine, ou La Séduction (Théâtre de la Gaîeté, 15.12.1821) became Adelaide, or The Fatal Seduction in a version by Ebsworth at the Royal Coburg (4.3.1822) and Adeline, or The Victim of Seduction by J.H. Payne at Drury Lane (9.2.1822). An earlier Payne adaptation, Thérèse, or The Orphan of Geneva (based on Thérèse, ou l'Orpheline de Genève, by Ducange, Théâtre de l'Ambigu-Comique, 23.11.20) first acted on February 2nd at Drury Lane in 1821, was followed on February 23rd as Henriette, or the Farm of Senange at Covent Garden; a third version could be seen at the Olympic. The tendency to borrow, adapt and imitate was as noticeable in opera as in melodrama; in practice, it is often impossible or fruitless to attempt to distinguish the genres. La Muette de Portici (Paris Opéra, 29.2.1828), Scribe's operatic libretto with Delavigne for Auber, was presented in three musical versions in London during 1829, as well as in the form of a ballet; while Robert le Diable (Scribe and Delavigne for Meyerbeer, Paris, 12.11.1831) spawned

five London adaptations during the course of 1832. As has been stated, the Romantic authors of historical or modern dramas were largely neglected, though James Kenney produced a version of Hernani for Drury Lane, The Pledge, or Castilian Honour (8.4.1831).[20] The theatrical context was dedicated to commercial novelty, rather than to creativity or originality. Artistic unity was a rare ideal, and an even rarer accomplishment.

The art of acting could equally be seen in terms of spectacle, novelty or competition. The freakish career of Master Betty at the start of the century was not an isolated phenomenon. On a higher level, Macready's first appearance on the London stage as Richard III (October 25th, 1819, Covent Garden) provoked an immediate response with a fresh production at Drury Lane for Kean. Even within one play, the element of competition could dominate. Kean as Othello disposed of Booth's Iago ruthlessly (February 20th, 1817); and, although he postponed the contest as long as possible, was equally uncompromising towards Macready in 1832. Macready's diary for December 10th records: "Iago. Acted well when Kean did not interfere with me."[21] In 1844 in Paris, Macready literally obscured Helen Faucit in Othello as she knelt to address the Venetian senate, with what Jules Janin described as "le grand paravent de Macready".[22] The concept of ensemble acting was not prominent, especially in tragedy. An event such as the Covent Garden Julius Caesar of April 22nd, 1822, hailed by the Theatrical Pocket Magazine as "the most perfect representation that has been seen on the stage for many years",[23] with Young as Brutus, Macready as Cassius, and Charles Kemble as Mark Antony, was an infrequent exception.

While Kean and Macready are the most distinctive and influential actors of the period, it is also necessary to take account of John Philip Kemble. Although he retired from the stage on June 23rd, 1817, he left his stamp on actors like Charles Mayne Young, who consciously modelled himself on him, and on his own younger brother Charles - just as his

theatre practice was handed down through the Covent Garden prompt-books, and memories of his performances in roles like Cato or Coriolanus became yardsticks for future generations. It was Charles Kemble and, to a lesser extent, William Abbott who represented the J.P. Kemble style and tradition during the Paris season of English theatre in 1827-28; while Young's advice on interpretation and staging was incorporated by Vigny in Le More de Venise. In his article "Players and Painted Stage: Nineteenth Century Acting", Alan S. Downer has suggested a division of English (tragic) acting into three schools: the classical style of J.P. Kemble, the "teapot" school of set gesture and intonation; the first romantic school of Edmund Kean; and the second romantic school of Macready, a modified romantic style, "thunderous with domestic touches".[24]

It needs to be stressed that these definitions and distinctions are restricted to tragedy, or at least to serious, "high" drama. There was a general tendency throughout the period for actors to specialise in one genre, and indeed in a line of parts within a genre. A comment such as the following is common in contemporary criticism: "Mr Wrench, an excellent actor in his way, played the gallant Mercutio with very much of the manner of Tom and Jerry."[25] The period was rich in actors who specialised in farce: Munden, Liston, Dowton, Farren. In comedy especially there was little attempt on the part of an actor to vary his characterisation. Audiences saw Liston as Lubin Log, or Liston as Sam Swipes, but always Liston; and the keynote to his style of presentation was exaggeration, with the emphasis on mannerisms, and on stage-business. The impact became more and more self-evidently theatrical and unnaturalistic.

The contrast between tragic and comic decorum in acting may be sensed in a description of Louis Simond, a Frenchman who emigrated to America before the French Revolution, and returned later to Europe. "Hamlet was acted yesterday (April 20th, 1811) and Kemble, the reigning prince of the

English stage, filled the principal part. He understands his art thoroughly, but wants spirit and nature. His manner is precise and artificial; his voice monotonous and wooden; his features are too large, even for the stage. Munden in the part of Polonius, and Fawcett in the grave-digger, played charmingly. It is enough to mention the grave-digger, to awaken in France the cry of rude and barbarous taste; and, were I to say how the part is acted, it might be still worse. After beginning their labour, and breaking ground for a grave, a conversation begins between the two grave-diggers. The chief one takes off his coat, folds it carefully, and puts it by in a safe corner; then, taking up his pick-axe, spits in his hand - gives a strike or two - talks - strips off his waistcoat, still talking - folds it with great deliberation and nicety, and puts it with the coat - then an under-waistcoat, still talking - another and another. I counted seven or eight, each folded and unfolded very leisurely, in a manner always different, and with gestures faithfully copied from nature. The British public enjoys this scene excessively, and the pantomimic variations a good actor knows how to introduce in it, are sure to be vehemently applauded. The French admit of no such relaxation in the dignité tragique."[26]

There are a number of points of interest in this account from the close of Kemble's reign at Covent Garden: the contrast with French decorum, the delight in pantomimic stage-business, the "gestures faithfully copied from nature" in the low, comic part of the play contrasted with the "precise and artificial" manner of the chief tragic actor. One might indeed see the chief problem for the theatre in the following fifty years to be the reconciliation and synthesis of the two styles. It is also significant that Simond describes J.P. Kemble in terms an Englishman might have applied to a French tragedian of the Comédie Française. Already the virtues of the classical style, consistency, control, clarity are being

judged as faults.

Hamlet, admittedly, was not one of Kemble's most convincing roles. He failed, according to Hazlitt, "from a want of flexibility". "There is a perpetual undulation of feeling in the character of Hamlet"; but in Mr Kemble's acting, "there was neither variableness nor shadow of turning". He played it "like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line..." Hazlitt claimed that the range of characters in which Kemble was "superior to every other actor, were those which consisted in the development of some one solitary sentiment or exclusive passion". His manner "had always something dry, hard, and pedantic in it"; but "his monotony did not fatigue, his formality did not displease; because there was always sense and meaning in what he did." In a telling comparison with Kean, Hazlitt drew attention to their physical differences. "The fineness of Mr Kemble's figure may be supposed to have led to that statue-like appearance, which his acting was sometimes too apt to assume: as the diminutiveness of Mr Kean's person has probably compelled him to bustle about too much, and to attempt to make up for the want of dignity of form, by the violence and contrast of his attitudes." This statuesque quality of Kemble was at its most prominent in a part like Cato: "It had all the dignity of still-life. It was a studied piece of classical costume -" - or, in Downer's phrase, the tea-pot school. Nevertheless, in a part such as Coriolanus or Leontes, Kemble was unrivalled. "In short, we think the distinguishing excellence of his acting may be summed up in one word - intensity; in the seizing upon some one feeling or idea, in insisting upon it, in never letting it go, and in working it up, with a certain graceful consistency, and conscious grandeur of conception, to a very high degree of pathos or sublimity."[27]

It is relevant to set, alongside Hazlitt's appraisal of Kemble, some comments on the performance of Talma in London at the King's Theatre the

same month. Talma knew Kemble well, had seen him act when a young man in London, admired him, and was a guest of honour at Kemble's farewell banquet on June 27th. On this engagement Talma was accompanied by Mlle George, and the evening took the form of recitations interspersed by music.

"Of M. Talma's acting we can hardly speak highly enough. Neither his face nor person is much in his favour; the one is flat and round, the other thick and short; nor has his voice much to boast of except a manly strength and depth." (These comments alone, though understandable in the context of summarising a foreign actor's qualities during a programme of extracts, indicate how conscious an audience remained of an actor's own person, as opposed to the impersonation of the late nineteenth-century tradition.) "He owes everything to the justness of his conception and to the energy of his execution. His acting displays the utmost force of passion, regulated by the clearest judgment. It is the triumph of art but of art still prompted and impelled and kindled into the very frenzy of enthusiasm by the inspiration of nature and genius. The declamation in his performance is scarcely attended to; the measure of the verse is entirely subordinate to the expression, whether slower or quicker, deeper or more vehement, of thought and feeling." Until that phrase "the very frenzy of enthusiasm", much of the commentary seems applicable to Kemble; but it would appear that Talma had moved in the same direction as Kean, while the remarks about the "measure of the verse" being "subordinate to the expression" are another indication of the shift towards a more naturalistic delivery. The Morning Post emphasised the differences between English and French acting conventions: "Talma finely displayed the despair of Orestes; but had the same noddings and shakings of the head and slappings of the knees, which were deservedly admired in Talma, been ventured upon by an English Orestes, we doubt if the audience would have refrained from laughter. He presented a most interesting picture of wild emotion but it

was produced by means to which few English actors could safely resort."[29] Whether the preponderance of French tragic acting was in fact more extravagant in terms of physical gesture must be doubted, in view of their reaction to the English Shakespeare season in 1827. It must also be remembered that Talma was both atypical and supreme, not least in his ability to marry the classical and the romantic.

Returning to Kemble, it must be remembered that, in addition to the common problem of making oneself heard in the London theatres, he suffered from an asthmatic condition.[30] The technique he developed to overcome these handicaps was described by Richard Cumberland in the following terms: "by distinct articulation, and a certain high-pitched modulation, approaching in acuteness to what is called a falsetto, he was perfectly well heard in all parts of the theatre".[30] This conscientiousness was by no means universal; Mrs Siddons refused to strain her voice by attempting to make herself heard by the whole audience. Kemble's vocal technique was further moderated by his approach to a role, part of what his biographer James Boaden called his "academic or critical style of acting: it is built on a metaphysical search into our nature, and a close attention to all the minutiae of language."[31] This approach laid much emphasis on the pause, and the stress, so that the actor was able to convey minute gradations and transitions of thought. Kemble's method, wrote Boaden, "lays a peculiar stress upon words, which before received no emphasis; because it analyses every thing by which meaning is conveyed, and can leave nothing to chance, which ought to be settled by reason." Kemble's delivery became increasingly measured, and his idiosyncratic pattern of inflection and pronunciation added to the total effect which Ludwig Tieck described in 1817 as "a slow, measured, wailing rhythm, regularly interrupted by considerable pauses and by a succession of high-pitched inflections." The emphatically intellectual basis of Kemble's acting is supported by Boaden

by a lengthy quotation from Sir Joshua Reynolds' seventh discourse on painting. Reynolds quotes Hamlet to the Players: "The end of playing, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirrour up to nature", but argues that the observation is modified by the precept "never to offend the ear by harsh sounds: 'In the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of your passion', says he, 'you must acquire and beget a temperance, that may give it smoothness'." This tempering leads to the following principle: "The poet and ACTOR, as well as the painter of genius, who is well acquainted with all the variety and sources of pleasure in the mind and imagination, has little regard or attention to common nature, or creeping after common sense. By overleaping those narrow bounds, he more effectually seizes the whole mind, and more powerfully accomplishes his purpose.....He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense of the word, is alone to be followed, will produce but a scanty entertainment for the imagination:" Boaden, extending the general argument to the particular case of Kemble, summarises: "The actor who looks no farther than common nature for the expression of the passions, will be short of the true mark; for though we are as men all liable to the same influences, they are greatly modified by our personal qualities and individual habits."[33]

In moving from Kemble to Kean, we leave the generalised, rational, idealised style for one much more particularised and, apparently, emotional. Hazlitt's detailed accounts of Kean's early roles constitute the most sensitive and detailed delineation of the romantic style of acting. Beginning with Shylock, which prompted Hazlitt to say that Kean had "all that Mr Kemble wants of perfection", Kean confirmed his individuality with a definitive Richard. "Mr Kean's manner of acting this part has one peculiar advantage; it is entirely his own, without any traces of imitation of any other actor....Almost every scene had the stamp and freshness of nature." Such a comment would not have been

intended as praise in an earlier age, when every variation from the standardised version was scrupulously examined; and indeed Hazlitt retains in most of his criticism the notion of that idealised concept of a Shakespearean character which may be formulated by the sensitive and educated reader. Yet Kean's energy, freshness and originality are the qualities which win Hazlitt's approval. "If Mr Kean does not completely succeed in concentrating all the lines of the character, as drawn by Shakespear, he gives an animation, vigour, and relief to the part, which we have never seen surpassed. He is more refined than Cooke; more bold, varied, and original than Kemble, in the same character."[34] The effects which Kean created were by no means the result of spontaneous improvisation; they were carefully prepared and calculated; and this detailed elaboration of intonation, gesture and movement was in sharp contrast to the polished restraint of Kemble. Commenting on Kean's second appearance as Richard, Hazlitt sounded a note of caution. "Our highest conception of an actor is, that he shall assume the character once for all, and be it throughout, and trust to this conscious sympathy for the effect produced. Mr Kean's manner of acting is, on the contrary, rather a perpetual assumption of his part, always brilliant and successful, almost always true and natural, but yet always a distinct effort in every new situation, so that the actor does not seem entirely to forget himself, or to be identified with the character. The extreme elaboration of the parts injures the broad and massy effect;..."[35] When Kean returned from a tour to Ireland in the autumn, and performed Richard at Drury Lane in October, Hazlitt was quick to warn him of the dangers of over-invention. "In general, we think it a rule, that an actor ought to vary his part as little as possible....He should make up his mind as to the best mode of representing the part, and come as near to this standard as he can, in every successive exhibition."[36] Allied to the notion of the

idealised, fixed character, is the practice by which a leading actor habitually acquired a role for life, and carried the concept with him to any theatre and production he appeared in. The idea that an actor might make anything more than minor adjustments to his performance was in itself mildly disturbing.

The variations Kean introduced were in both voice and gesture. "His pauses are twice as long as they were, and the rapidity with which he hurries over other parts of the dialogue is twice as great as it was." Kean, no doubt anxious to experiment, was replacing one kind of tyranny with another: "Even some want of mechanical skill is better than the perpetual affectation of shewing it." At the same time Hazlitt gave Kean credit for what he termed his "bye-play": "it might be said, that if Shakespear had written marginal directions to the players, in the manner of the German dramatists, he would often have directed them to do what Mr Kean does." This emphasis on action and gesture to convey dramatic meaning is new, at least in degree; again, Hazlitt warned Kean against the dangers of excess. "In the latter scenes, perhaps his energy could not be too great; but he gave the energy of action alone. He merely gesticulated, or at best vociferated the part."[37] But when the gestural or vocal interpretation was judged to be more controlled, more in harmony, one can perceive through Hazlitt's acute descriptions both the power and excitement of Kean's acting, and, by contrast, the limp monotony which was too often the norm. Two instances from the notice on Hamlet[38] may be taken as representative of Kean's invention. "Whether the way in which Mr Kean hesitates in repeating the first line of the speech in the interview with the player, and then, after several ineffectual attempts to recollect it, suddenly hurries on with it, 'The rugged Pyrrhus', etc. is in perfect keeping, we have some doubts: but there was great ingenuity in the thought; and the spirit and life of the execution was beyond every-

thing." So naturalistic a hesitation would seem common-place today; the surprise more likely to be occasioned by an actor neglecting to pause. Of Kean's acting in the scene of the Mouse-trap, Hazlitt commented that it was "the most daring of any", and that its "extreme boldness" "bordered on the verge of all we hate"; it was this scene which the critic of the Morning Herald denounced, for in it Kean exposed his "derrière" to Ophelia while crawling "upon his belly towards the King 'like a wounded snake in a meadow' rather than a Prince openly indulging himself in moral speculation in the saloon of a royal palace."[39] Finally, to counter any suggestion that Kean's impact rested on isolated detail, one quote from Hazlitt on Othello (Fig 2) may serve: "The whole of the latter part of the third act was a master-piece of profound pathos and exquisite conception, and its effect on the house was electrical. The tone of voice in which he delivered the beautiful apostrophe, 'Then, oh farewell!' struck on the heart and the imagination like the swelling notes of some divine music. The look, the action, the expression of voice, with which he accompanied the exclamation, 'Not a jot, not a jot;' the reflection, 'I felt not Cassio's kisses on her lips;' and his vow of revenge against Cassio, and abandonment of his love for Desdemona, laid open the very tumult and agony of the soul."[40] The sense of achievement is so vivid that it comes as something of a shock to read a few lines further that "The rest of the play was by no means judiciously cast; indeed, almost every individual appeared to be out of his proper place." The romantic actor was a solo instrument.

The contrast with John Philip Kemble may be inferred from a passage by Kemble's grand-daughter Fanny, Mrs Butler. She stresses Kean's physical qualifications: "an eye like an orb of light, a voice exquisitely touching and melodious in its tenderness, and in the harsh dissonance of vehement passion terribly true: to these he adds the intellectual ones of vigour, intensity, amazing power of concentrating effect - these give him

an entire mastery over his audience in all striking, sudden, impassioned passages, in fulfilling which he has contented himself, leaving unheeded what he could not compass - the unity of conception, the refinement of detail, and evenness of execution." Those last three phrases suggest the essence of Kemble's art as an actor. Fanny Kemble added an explanatory note to her praise of Kean, perhaps feeling that she was being disloyal to the family tradition: "I have lived among those whose theatrical creed would not permit them to acknowledge him as a great actor; but they must be bigoted indeed who would deny that he was a great genius - a man of most original and striking powers, careless of art, perhaps because he did not need it, but possessing those rare gifts of nature without which art is as a dead body." Her final word is a characteristic Romantic comparison: "If he was irregular and unartist-like in his performance, so is Niagara compared with the waterworks of Versailles."[41]

William Macready, the only English tragic actor of his day to rival Kean, presents a complete contrast to him both in terms of personality and in the pattern of his career. Whereas Kean burst upon the London theatrical scene in a series of brilliant and definitive performances, Macready's technique was developed and polished during the course of many years, including long periods of comparative obscurity in provincial theatres. Macready, cautious by temperament, was given to long reflection and careful preparation. Yet his inner fire and talent were equally impressive from the moment of his first appearance at Covent Garden on September 16th, 1816, where he played Orestes in The Distressed Mother, an adaptation by Ambrose Phillips of Racine's Andromaque. William Harris, the manager, assured him "if you can carry a play along with such a cast, I don't know what you cannot do". More analytically, Hazlitt praised him in the Examiner: "His voice is powerful in the highest degree, and at the same time possesses great harmony and modulation. His face is not equally

calculated for the stage. He declaims better than any body we have lately heard. He is accused of being violent and wanting pathos. Neither of these objections is true....We have not the slightest hesitation, that Mr Macready is by far the best tragic actor that has come out in our remembrance, with the exception of Mr Kean."[42] The deficiencies of the performance Hazlitt ascribed to the poor quality of the play in question; Macready was blocked from many roles in his eventual repertoire by the presence of Young and Charles Kemble. But Hazlitt identifies two striking characteristics of Macready's style: the modulation in his voice, which he developed consciously into a naturalistic style of delivery; and his tendency to violence, which he learned to deploy to great effect. A few weeks later Macready and Young alternated in the parts of Othello and Iago. Hazlitt paid Macready the compliment of comparing his performance with that of Kean, but it was not a definitive reading. Hazlitt commented unfavourably on one trait which, again, Macready was later to master - the transition from heroic strength to domestic pathos. "Another fault in Mr Macready's conception was, that he whined and whimpered once or twice, and tried to affect the audience by affecting a pitiful sensibility, not consistent with the dignity and masculine imagination of the character: as where he repeated, 'No, not much moved,' and again, 'Othello's occupation's gone,' in a childish treble." Such 'domestic touches' and vocal transitions would later be accomplished with no sense of incongruity. When the energetic Macready played Iago, a part he had never studied, to the stately Young's Othello, Hazlitt wrote: "Young in Othello was like a great humming-top and Macready in Iago like a mischievous boy whipping him."[43] This was a significant clash between two essentially irreconcilable styles of acting.

The alignment of Macready with the school of Kean was confirmed by his playing of Richard III at Covent Garden on October 25th, 1819, after

several years largely confined to the role of villain in a succession of melodramas. To appear in a part so identified with Kean was inviting comparison; to succeed was to confirm Macready's status as the second great actor of his day. The Times judged it a performance which "could only result from a great histrionic talent, combined with physical and mental energy". Leigh Hunt commented that "when we compare Mr Macready with Mr Kean, it is to be recollected that Mr Kean first gave the living stage that example of a natural style of acting, on which Mr Macready has founded his new rank in the theatrical world". One defect he noted was similar to that inconsistent touch of pathos which Hazlitt had objected to in Othello. "We allude to some over-soft and pathetic tones towards the conclusion of the part, where Richard is undergoing remorse of conscience. Richard might lament and even be pathetic; but he would certainly never whine, or deal in anything approaching to the lack-a-daisical..." In conclusion, Hunt draws attention to features which may seem surprising in an actor generally considered to stress the sombre and the serious: "We certainly never saw the gayer part of Richard to such advantage. His very step in the more sanguine scenes had a princely gaiety of self-possession;..." If Kean's Richard was "more like King Richard, darkened by the shadow of his very approaching success", Macready's Richard was "more like the Duke of Gloucester, brother to the gay tyrant Edward IV".[44] Other journals, like the Morning Chronicle, "studiously avoided all comparisons": "it is not necessary to the reputation of either that the other should be depreciated."[45]

At the end of the season Macready appeared in a role which marked a dramatic initiative of a kind distinct from those of Kean. This was the title-role of Sheridan Knowles's Virginius (Fig.3), one of the most competent plays of the period written in the Jacobean style, leaning both on Shakespeare and on Webster. The play reflects the age's interest in classical arche-

types; yet while the setting and action strive to suggest public grandeur, the sentiments, and the language in which they are expressed, emphasise the intimate and domestic. Macready proved himself a master of the transitions from the noble to the domestic, shifting from explosive wrath to paternal tenderness, and bringing the atmosphere of the English family drawing-room into the Roman forum. Macready regularly used his own emotional experiences to intensify and naturalize his acting. When Virginius gives his daughter to her betrothed, Icilius, the image of his (Macready's) own wife and daughter came to mind: "I spoke from my soul - the tears came from my heart".[46] He believed in as complete an identification with his part as possible, best accomplished by close study of the character over a period of weeks, and meticulous preparation, mental and physical, on the day itself. For such a perfectionist, it was a logical step to move in due course towards absolute control of the production and rehearsals. Although it was some years before Macready achieved this ideal, he was invited to stage-manage Virginius, in spite of the objections of the veteran Egerton; he also provided his own costume. It may be to Macready's credit that Hazlitt praised the play for being so admirably adapted to the stage. "It presents a succession of pictures. We might suppose each scene almost to be copied from a beautiful bas-relief, or to have formed a group on some antique vase....But it is a speaking, a living picture we are called upon to witness. These figures so strikingly, so simply, so harmoniously combined, start into life and action, and breathe forth words, the soul of passion - inflamed with anger, or melting with tenderness..."[47]

As Macready matured as an actor, his efforts became more and more sharply focussed on the ideal of unity of design. But it was a concept of unity far removed from that of J.P. Kemble, for Macready's was a concept which sought to include some acknowledgement of the contemporary world, at

least in terms of intonation, gesture and emotion, just as it included the thoughts and passions of the actor himself. If Kemble's unity might be described as excluding everything which detracted from tragic decorum, Macready strove to integrate variety and complexity within a unified pattern. The highest reach of the player's art "is to fathom the depths of character, to trace its latent motives, to feel its finest quiverings of emotion, to comprehend the thoughts that are hidden under words, and thus possess oneself of the actual mind of the individual man."[48] He eschewed individual effects, or points - though some of his mannerisms, such as the pronounced "Macready pause", must have been indistinguishable from the kind of trick he criticised in others - in favour of complete identification: "I cannot act Macbeth without <u>being Macbeth</u>."[49]

The emphasis on actors, rather than actresses, in the discussion so far is deliberate. Sarah Siddons dominated the London stage from 1782 to 1812, the year of her official retirement; and as a standard of comparison she remained seldom rivalled and never surpassed until, perhaps, the advent of Ellen Terry. The extent of her artistic supremacy may be gauged from Byron's admission: "Miss O'Neill I never saw, having made and kept a determination to see nothing which should divide or disturb my recollections of Siddons. Siddons and Kemble were the <u>ideal</u> of tragic action...."[50] Mrs Siddons excelled in roles such as Volumnia and Lady Macbeth in which her strength and authority could have full scope. For Hazlitt she was "Tragedy personified". Charles Young recalled an episode from <u>Coriolanus</u> which demonstrates both the strength of her acting and the arresting introduction of incipient naturalism. His example was based on Act Two Scene Two where an ovation for Coriolanus was introduced, involving a procession of two hundred and forty people - in itself an interesting precursor of Victorian spectacle. "...Instead of dropping each foot, at equi-distance, in its place, with mechanical exactitude, and, in cadence

subservient to the orchestra; deaf to the guidance of her woman's ear, but sensitive to the throbbings of her haughty, mother's heart, with flashing eye, and proudest smile, and head erect, and hands pressed firmly on her bosom, as if to repress by manual force its triumphant swellings, she towered above all around her, and rolled, and, almost, reeled across the stage; her very soul as it were, dilating, and rioting in its exultation; until her action lost all grace, and, yet, became so true to nature, so picturesque, and so descriptive, that pit and gallery sprang to their feet electrified by the transcendent execution of the conception..."[51] Mrs Siddons could over-ride both theatrical convention and male dominance. Her successors, with few exceptions, remained noticeably more subservient.

There were numerous reasons for this, among them the presence of two major actors in Kean and Macready. The parts each chose most frequently to play from the traditional repertory in themselves tended to exaggerate the dominance of the male role (Richard, Othello, Hamlet and, later, for Macready, Macbeth and Lear); while the textual versions currently in use increased the bias: Othello was customarily given without the willow-song scene, the part of Ophelia so truncated that it was usually entrusted to a singer. New drama tended to relegate women to roles of passive suffering: Virginia, (in Virginius) first played by Maria Foote, is a representative example. English actresses, according to Delacroix, were "divinely beautiful" and often "more worth seeing than the play itself"[52] but it was rare for them to have more than a supportive role. Miss O'Neill was one exception. Her career, and hence her influence, was severely limited in time; she made her first appearance at Covent Garden as Juliet in 1814, and left the stage in December, 1819.

In spite of a grudging opening - "We occasionally see something on the stage that reminds us a little of Shakespear" - and two ensuing paragraphs entirely devoted to the immortal but already retired Mrs

Siddons, Hazlitt's notice of Miss O'Neill's début is evidence of her quality. As with many actresses of the time, the most striking features of her playing were physical appearance and pantomime, or silent acting: "Her action is impressive and simple. She looks the part she has to perform, and fills up the pauses in the words, by the varied expression of her countenance or gestures, without anything artificial, pointed or far-fetched.

In the silent expression of feeling, we have seldom witnessed any thing finer than her acting, where she is told of Romeo's death, her listening to the Friar's story of the poison, and her change of manner towards the Nurse, when she advises her to marry Paris."[53] This emphasis on the visual is particularly associated with actresses; partly no doubt because of the generally subsidiary roles, in terms of words, they were called on to perform, partly because of the increased emphasis on the visual brought about by developments in scenic arrangement and lighting, partly because of the sheer vastness of the auditoria. This last feature, coupled with the restless demeanour of a normal English audience, presented a formidable challenge to the female speaking voice. In fact, the sheer size of the main London theatres was probably the dominant factor in determining acting style. As Tomlins commented, "The size of the patent theatres is also excessively injurious to actors, requiring an union of bodily and mental powers in one individual that reduces the chances of success considerably. Even to the very few whose 'physique' is sufficient for 'the wilderness', it is very injurious, seducing them into rant and exaggeration; and to many very imaginative and passionate actors, it must present an impassable barrier."[54] In spite of these difficulties, the features Hazlitt distinguishes in Miss O'Neill are consistent with the naturalistic style of Kean and Macready: the accent on simplicity, and the detailed and appropriate reactions by which facial expression and gesture

fill up "the pauses in the words".

Whereas the above qualities, of simplicity and skill in pantomime, were found in several leading actresses, Miss O'Neill, like Mrs Siddons, added to them the rarer attribute of a strong voice - "without being musical", it was "distinct, powerful, and capable of every necessary exertion" - and the capacity to project emotion. "Her delivery of the speeches in the scenes where she laments Romeo's banishment, and anticipates her waking in the tomb, marked the fine play and undulation of natural sensibility, rising and falling with the gusts of passion, and at last worked up into an agony of despair, in which imagination approaches the brink of frenzy." Occasionally, she might exceed the limits of what "natural sensibility" suggested: "her actually screaming at the imaginary sight of Tybalt's ghost, appeared to us the only instance of extravagance or caricature".[55] Such a scream would, no doubt, have been thought entirely appropriate in the context of melodrama. There are several critics who commented on Miss O'Neill's tendency to the extremes of action and emotion. John Poole praised her in many of the same terms as Hazlitt, with an especially interesting analysis of the quality of her voice: "Her voice is good, particularly in its undertones, and without effort, or affectation, or anything like the common stage style of speaking; it is modulated entirely by the thought or feeling she has to express."[56] But he, too, found her action "sometimes excessive; as, for instance, in her soliloquy with the phial as Juliet."

The London Magazine, in two articles assessing Miss O'Neill's career in 1820, commented that she had of late "carried the expression of mental agony and distress to a degree of physical horror that is painful to behold, and which is particularly repulsive in a person of her delicacy of frame and truly feminine appearance."[57] It is evident that social conventions as to what was appropriate for a woman to express on stage

inhibited female acting to some extent; it may be significant that the three actresses discussed in this section all came from theatrical families, having fathers who headed touring companies. What is more surprising is that the physical, or certain manifestations of the physical, is seen as somehow separated from and incompatible with the expression of moral ideas and states of mind. The strength that was acceptable for Mrs Siddons as Volumnia or Lady Macbeth was considered indecorous in roles like Isabella or Mrs Beverley, where Miss O'Neill appeared to be "made of softness and suffering". A further comment in the February issue expands the reservation: "Her eye-balls rolled in her head; her words rattled in her throat. This was carrying reality too far. The sufferings of the body are no longer proper for dramatic exhibition when they become objects of painful attention in themselves, and are not merely indicative of what passes in the mind - comments and interpreters of the moral scene within."[58] Here again one senses a conflict between a controlled, representational style of acting, as exemplified by Kemble, and the impulse towards a detailed and almost spontaneous realism.

Miss O'Neill's naturalism resulted from an ability, which she shared with Macready among others, to identify herself with her part - she was one of the few of Macready's contemporaries for whom he had scarcely qualified praise. One of his observations: "She was an entirely modest woman; yet in acting with her I have been nearly smothered by her kisses"[59] draws attention to a feature others remarked upon in his own acting: the total absorption of the player's personality by the role. Boaden described the impact of her absorbed yet natural representation of suffering: "Every nerve is strained, her frame is convulsed, her breath suspended, her forehead knit together, fate encloses her round and seizes on his struggling victim."[60] Miss O'Neill made her most striking appearances in the role of innocent victim; as Belvidera in Venice

Preserv'd, Jane in Jane Shore, and Bianca in Milman's Fazio, which won Shelley's approval. The connection with the stock stereotype of melodrama is obvious; but the role is equally central to the Romantic imagination, in the form of, for example, Ophelia or Gretchen/Marguerite.

For ten years after Miss O'Neill's retirement, no actress was judged to have equalled her on the London stage. Harriet Smithson's performances in Paris, where she evoked a response as enthusiastic as that which greeted Miss O'Neill in London, are described in chapters four and five. When she played the part of Juliet at Covent Garden in 1829 to Charles Kemble's Romeo she was adjudged "not a Siddons, no, nor an O'Neill, but a fair actress as actresses go." There follows a revealing attempt, in assessing her merits, to distinguish the English from the French style of playing tragedy. "The style of Miss Smithson is composite, and made up of what is termed the English natural school of acting and the French stilted tragedy. These two manners she plays off in piano and forte against each other for the sake of contrast: and in the same sentence she gives us the familiarity of Macready or Kean, and the heroics of Mademoiselle George. Her level acting is English, and her rants are sublimely French."[61] Whatever the truth of the observation as applied to Miss Smithson, the attempt at the distinction has significance. By 1829, the innovations developed during the 1815-1827 period by Kean and Macready had become recognized as the norm. The familiar, the domestic and the colloquial, which we may relate to Bulwer Lytton's term the Simple, were the dominant means by which the idea of the natural was conveyed.

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Chapter 2

FRENCH THEATRE AND THE ART OF ACTING, 1815-1827

In contrast to the culture shock experienced by French and German travellers at Drury Lane or Covent Garden, every English visitor who attended one of the leading French theatres was struck by the essential seriousness of the French spectators. Lady Morgan, awaiting a performance of Britannicus at the Théâtre-Français, felt that she was "cold, languid, and inanimate" compared to the audience that surrounded her. "Some were reading over the tragedy; others were commenting particular passages: - a low murmur of agitation crept through the house, like the rustling of leaves to a gentle wind, until the rising of the curtain stilled every voice, composed every muscle, and riveted the very existence of the audience...upon the scene."[1] Hazlitt, in a most revealing analysis, observed that "The order, the attention, the decorum were such as would shame any London audience. The attention was more like that of a learned society to a lecture on some scientific subject, than of a promiscuous crowd collected together merely for amusement....There was a professional air, an unvarying gravity in the looks and demeanour of the whole assembled multitude, as if every one had an immediate interest in the character of the national poetry, in the purity of the French accent, in the propriety of the declamation, in the conceptions of the actor, and the development of the story....The least noise or irregularity called forth the most instant and lively disapprobation."[2] In a sweeping but convincing attempt to account for this major difference, Hazlitt suggests that at its heart lies a capacity on the part of the French to deal in abstractions: "there seemed to be an abstract interest felt in the stage as such, in the sound of the verse, in the measured step of the actors, in the recurrence of the same pauses, and of the same ideas; in the correctness of the costume, in

the very notion of the endeavour after excellence, and in the creation of an artificial and imaginary medium of thought."[3] It is this last phrase which is crucial to an understanding of the apparent gulf between French and English theatrical practice. Where French classical drama stressed the ideal and the abstract, a structure of thought, the English tradition emphasised the actual and the concrete, a structure of action. With the French, continued Hazlitt, "to the sublime or pathetic there is but one step - the name; the moment the subject is started, they 'jump at' the catastrophe and all the consequences. We are slow, and must have a thing made out to us in striking instances, and by successive blows....Words are more nearly allied to things in their minds." Yet this faculty inhibited the French from reaching beyond the abstract conception in the theatre; and too often a "vague, flaccid, enervated rhetoric" was substituted "for the pith and marrow of truth and nature".[4] The notion of an abstract, static theatre propounded by Hazlitt, appealing essentially to the ear and so to the memory, to generalized experience, finds an echo in Stendhal's definition of classicism as presenting people "with the literature which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their great-grandparents".[5]

In Paris, tragedy and serious comedy was the strict preserve of the Théâtre-Français, which was prohibited from presenting other kinds of drama. The Théâtre-Français was specifically licensed and subsidised to perform a largely traditional repertory, and any new works had to conform to strict definitions and be approved by a reading committee in which the leading actors' views predominated. The company itself was subject to a strict and hierarchical organization; actors and actresses acquired particular roles often only after long apprenticeships, and guarded them jealously from ambitious colleagues. Audiences, though respectful as the descriptions above suggest, began to desert the Théâtre-Français in the 1820s for the spectacles and melodramas available in boulevard theatres

like the Porte-Saint-Martin or the Ambigu-Comique, or for the opera, both French and Italian.

The tendency to conservatism and rigidity, long established under the ancien régime, was accentuated by Napoleon. Napoleon took a close interest in the theatre, and was an intimate friend of Talma. Between 1800 and 1807 he reorganized the theatrical system on a pattern broadly similar to the one which prevailed before the Revolution, with four major and four minor houses. The Restoration brought about a general freedom from the more detailed and restrictive practices, but the major beneficiaries were the boulevard theatres which increased both in number and, as a result of their more imaginative, or at least innovative, repertories, in popularity. In the period between 1815 and 1830 the minor houses were responsible for 369 new comedies, 280 melodramas, 200 comic operas, and 1300 vaudevilles: the major theatres produced 72 new tragedies in the same period.[6]

The boulevard theatres made a far greater contribution to the development of French drama than their English counterparts, because they were far more innovative in terms of dramatic form, mise en scène, and, crucially, acting style. It would be inappropriate to attempt a comprehensive survey of French theatre at this juncture, but it is helpful to draw attention to certain key figures and contexts.[7] The Porte-Saint-Martin, closed by Napoleonic decree in 1807, was eventually re-opened at the Restoration by J.T. Merle. The melodramas and spectacles for which it became known were frequently of English derivation. Ciceri created a number of effective sets for works such as Le Château de Kenilworth (1822); while an English specialist in stage machinery, Tompkins, was engaged to provide the effects for Le Monstre et le magicien (1826), an adaptation of Frankenstein in which Marie Dorval played Cécilia and T.P. Cooke the Monster, transformed into a dumb role for the occasion. (Fig. 12) For Faust (1828), the stage was divided into half to show both hell and heaven.

The Panorama-Dramatique had only a brief existence, from 1821 to 1823. Here the stage settings were of infinitely greater interest and merit than the vehicles they illustrated. Alaux, Gué, Daguerre and Ciceri produced designs for the mélodrames produced, or adapted, largely by Taylor, later to assume the administration of the Comédie Française. One of these was a collaboration between Taylor and Charles Nodier, Bertram (Fig.14) - "tragédie en cinq actes traduite librement de l'anglais du Révérend C.-R. Maturin". This was the play recommended by Scott to Byron, and acted by Kean at Drury Lane, and is a good example of an English Gothic export. The term tragédie is a misnomer: in both its English and French form Bertram is the most unsubtle of melodramas. The preliminary description of Act One Scene Two in the English version defines the manner:

> The Rocks - The Sea - A Storm - The Convent illuminated in the back ground - The Bell tolls at intervals - A group of Monks on the rocks with torches - A Vessel in distress in the offing. Enter the Prior and Monks below.
>
> Prior:"Holy St Anselm - what a sight is here!"[8]

The "sight" was paramount; in fact, one of the stipulations for the Panorama-Dramatique's licence was that there should never be more than two speaking actors on stage simultaneously. Ciceri responded boldly to the opportunity of creating sets reflecting the Gothic, the medieval, and the Romantic, in contrast to the hitherto predominantly academic neo-classicism he had pursued at the Opéra.

Other theatres were important because of their acting companies, or their repertory. The great comic actor Potier played habitually at the Théâtre des Variétés; Frédérick Lemaître's career was consolidated by his seasons at the Ambigu. Scribe, who began by writing for the Vaudeville, was later persuaded to write his comedies for the Gymnase, re-named the Théâtre de Madame under the patronage of the Duchesse de Berry in 1824. The acting company included the character actor Perlet, and Jenny Vertpré.

The Gaîté and the Ambigu subsisted principally on melodramas, of which Pixérécourt was the most prolific provider.

Pixérécourt, who, with Scribe, must have been responsible for more theatrical performances in the nineteenth century than any other writer, is worth some consideration as a theorist.

> "Une pièce de théâtre ne peut être bien pensée, bien faite, bien dialoguée, bien répétée, bien joué que sous les auspices et par les soins d'un seul homme ayant le même goût, le même jugement, le même esprit, le même coeur et la même opinion."[9]

One might set against this Edward Gordon Craig's argument:

> "Now, then, it is impossible for a work of art ever to be produced where more than one brain is permitted to direct; and if works of art are not seen in the Theatre this one reason is a sufficient one, though there are plenty more."[10]

Pixérécourt's plays may not be the kind of works of art which Craig had in mind. But in terms of the author's close control, and of minute attention to the ways the plays were staged, they are impressive demonstrations. Coelina or l'enfant du mystère (1799) contains many representative features and served as an early prototype of the genre. The theme is the ubiquitous one of persecuted innocence; the characters include the virtuous heroine, the villain with a guilty secret, the credulous guardian, the dumb unfortunate; the settings and spectacular effects represent an amalgam of the Gothic and the domestic. The opening of Act Three gives the flavour:

> "Le théâtre représente un lieu sauvage, connu sous le nom de montagne du Nant-d'Arpennaz; dans le fond, entre deux rochers très-élevés, est un pont de bois, au-dessous duquel se précipite un torrent écumeux, qui traverse le théâtre et vient passer derrière un moulin, placé à droite au second plan; la porte du moulin fait face à la coulisse, et les croisées sont vis-à-vis des spectateurs; il y a un banc de pierre au-dessous des croisées; à quelques pas du moulin, se trouve un petit pont très-frèle qui communique à un sentier escarpé qui borde le torrent et mène au haut de la montagne. Des sapins répandus cà et là, semblent encore faire ressortir davantage l'aspérité de ce séjour. A gauche, vis-à-vis du moulin, est une petite masse de rochers,

> couronnée par deux ou trois sapins, et au-devant de laquelle on remarque une partie platte, taillée pour faire un banc.
>
> Pendant l'entr'acte on entend le bruit éloigné du tonnerre; bientôt l'orage augmente, et au lever du rideau toute la nature paroît en désordre; les éclairs brillent de toutes parts, le torrent roule avec fureur, les vents mugissent, la pluie tombe avec fracas, et des coups de tonnerre multipliés qui se répètent cent fois, par l'écho des montagnes, portent l'épouvante et la terreur dans l'âme."[11]

The text is unrefined. Pixérécourt is reported to have claimed to write for those who were unable to read. The visual element dominates, and one is continually reminded of the scenarios of popular films. As in film, the emotional responses of the audience were organized and enforced by the accompanying music, as Thomas Holcroft's English adaptation somewhat laconically demonstrates:

> "The increasing storm of lightning, thunder, hail, and rain becomes terrible. Suitable music."[12]

The emphasis on narrative, and upon unusual and exotic settings, is marked. Geoffroy, the astringent critic of the Journal des Débats, appreciated the extent of the influence which the new public exerted:

> "Des gens qui payent ont droit d'exiger des amusements de leur goût, et s'embarrassent peu des règles de l'art: les lecteurs ne veulent point d'autres livres que des romans; les spectateurs ne demandent pas d'autres pièces que des drames, qui sont des romans en action."[13]

Echoing Bulwer Lytton's comments on the Simple and the Magnificent, Geoffroy on another occasion summarised Pixérécourt's success in responding to the demands of his public:

> "Le boulevard semble être aujourd'hui la grande sphère d'activité de notre poésie dramatique. Sur ce Parnasse nouveau, chaque mois voit éclore un chef-d'oeuvre, tandis que nos plus nobles théâtres, frappés d'une stérilité honteuse, abusent du privilège de la noblesse, et vivent sur leur ancienne gloire. Il ne manque plus aux mélodrames, pour acquérir un titre vraiment littéraire, que la pompe de la représentation, l'éloquence et la dignité du style: du reste, on y trouve plus

> d'invention, quelquefois plus d'intérêt, souvent autant de régularité et de vraisemblance, que dans beaucoup de pièces soi-disant régulières."[14]

More and more of the public were drawn to the mélodrames and drames of the boulevards, while deserting the Théâtre-Français. There the outstanding actor of the period was Talma, who made his début at the Théâtre-Français in 1787, and who died in 1826 just at the time when the Comédie-Française under its new Commissaire Baron Taylor was beginning to respond to the Romantic movement. Talma was both outstanding and atypical. As Delécluze remarked, "He reigned well, but he reigned alone, and it is true to say that tragedy would not have been tolerated in France had it not been for him."[15]

Many features of his theatre practice and acting have interesting counterparts in the practices of his English contemporaries, and it is relevant to recall that Talma was brought up in England, spoke English fluently, and studied English dramatic authors: at one point, it was even suggested that he should make his career in the London theatre. More importantly, he took every opportunity to observe English acting, and remained on close terms with actors such as John Kemble. His close knowledge of Shakespeare enabled him to advise Ducis about his adaptations, and, more effectively, to impart something of the spirit of the major roles into Ducis's restrained and pallid characterisations.

In commenting on Talma's gifts, Delécluze, in his journal entry for October 21st, 1826, placed as his most distinctive characteristic Talma's ability to identify himself with his role. "He entered into the characters which he represented; he ceased to be himself and made you believe that you saw and heard the character whose essence he wished to convey."[16] This ability, according to Delécluze, was not universally exercised; he detected a certain air of embarrassment on the actor's part in weakly written roles which were "false, unnatural and mannered"; but in

(Fig. 15)
roles such as Néron or Joad, "where everything is clear, true, strong and natural, the actor who played them was equally true, strong and natural".

The search for the natural is the central quest of the age, just as the definition of what constitutes the natural is the central critical issue. Talma paralleled Kemble in reforming theatrical costume, an area in which, as in scene design, French practice had been even more lackadaisical than that of the English. In January, 1789, Talma was cast as Proculus, a military tribune, in Voltaire's Brutus - a seventeen-line part. Louise Contat is supposed to have seen him crossing the green room and cried "Look at Talma! How ugly he is! He looks just like one of those old statues." In response, Talma unrolled the scroll he was carrying and revealed the sketch for his costume executed by David. His appearance on stage by the side of characters dressed in wigs and breeches brought consternation from the actors and applause from the audience. The process of reform was slow, and resisted by many; Talma regarded it as one of his greatest contributions to the theatres of Europe.[17]

Delécluze considered that the careful researches embarked upon by Talma, which led him to the close scrutiny of statues and medals, and collaboration with David, Girodet and Gros among others, also had a great influence upon his style of acting. "In studying the physical and daily habits of different peoples, he was led to analyse gesture. So, I believe that while scrutinizing, for example, the simplicity of movement revealed in Greek sculpture, he simplified his own movements, which must have led him to simplify his diction."[18] Towards the close of his career, Talma sought to preserve the music of tragic verse while giving it the ease and "laisser-aller" of prose. "This major problem which he happily resolved led him to simplify still further his gestures and to use more regularly the natural resources of his fine voice". (One might compare this process with the striving of Macready to employ "that natural manly tone of

dialogue, with which I must endeavour to improve the colloquial groundwork of my acting".)[19]

Delécluze offers one unusual insight into the relations between painting and the stage when he suggests that Talma exercised on a later generation of painters the same kind of influence that David had earlier had on him. "It was especially in the reign of Napoleon, a great admirer of Talma, that the latter served as some sort of model, or ideal type, for painters. In fact, in the painting of that period (with subjects from the ancient world), one sees commonly postures, arrangement of drapery and even facial expressions such as those commonly used on the stage by Talma."[20] Delécluze's editor, Robert Baschet, adds in a footnote that when a painting by Delécluze himself was exhibited in the Salon of 1814, entitled "Auguste et Cinna", a critic noticed a resemblance in Augustus to the features and figure of an actor "en réputation".

If Talma sought to become a more striking, simple and 'natural' actor by imitating art, there were occasions when he also drew on contemporary life. On December 27th, 1821, Talma appeared in the title-role of Jouy's Sylla. Talma, by means partly of a wig with Napoleon's characteristic lock falling on to his forehead, partly by his tone of voice and gestures, powerfully brought the image of the lately dead Emperor to the stage. But the play incorporated other features which held importance for the future, not least its use of crowd scenes. It also provided the first instance in French drama when a tragic hero lay down in bed on stage, a breach of decorum which perhaps only Talma could have accomplished: the rarity of such naturalistic behaviour helps to explain the French audience's disquiet at such Shakespearean scenes as Othello suffocating Desdemona in her bed-chamber. A grateful Jouy wrote: "Those studied gestures, those sculptured poses, those contrived tones of voice, all conventional art he rejects. He is nature in all her simplicity, passion caught on the wing, feeling in

all its surrender..."[21]

The exceptional quality of Talma's acting was recognized by Stendhal, in a retrospective article for the New Monthly Magazine. At the same time he drew attention to the tradition of French tragic declamation which Talma inherited and modified:

> "Talma chanted even less than Le Kain; yet....he was not altogether free from a certain degree of formality. He was at his best in the delivery of half-lines of broken verse, such as the qu'en dis-tu in Lafosse's tragedy Manlius. Nevertheless, when he had twenty lines in succession to recite, he often chanted as much as Le Kain. Talma's death will probably see this style of recitation entirely banished from the French stage. Our tragic declamation at the moment is characterised by that affectation of dignity which Macready assumes in the rôle of Virginius. In time, however, it is sure to approximate towards the style of Kean in Othello. All our tragedians in turn will try to perform in Talma's various rôles, yet none of them probably will rise above mediocrity. The truth of the matter is that the public taste now demands simplicity, and our present actors are even more formal than Talma. They have not the sense to perceive that the Charter which Louis XVIII was forced to grant us in 1814 has produced a marked effect on our manners."[22]

The references to the declamatory styles of Kean and Macready are prophetic in the light of the forthcoming English theatre season in Paris during 1827 and 1828. The emergence of simplicity, as a necessary response to a public's taste founded on political reality, makes a significant parallel to the analysis of Bulwer Lytton, and suggests that the current state of the drama in France and England had more in common than the diversities of manner and tradition indicate.

Stendhal's reference to Lekain, Talma's great predecessor, was apposite, since in 1825 Talma had written Quelques réflexions sur Lekain et sur l'art théâtral. Talma had never actually seen Lekain on stage, but had acted with many who had learned their art from him. The comment on Lekain's chanting is a reminder that the eighteenth century style of declamation was more akin to singing than to speaking. Talma praised

Lekain for the innovations he had made in the style of his delivery, notably the way in which he coloured it to accord with the emotional state of the character:

> "Lekain displayed supreme intelligence in the tempo of his delivery, which he made more or less rapid, more or less slow, according to the emotional state of the character, whose lines he would often break up with studied pauses."[23]

Lekain's practice has obvious affinities with that of Kemble, as described in Chapter 1. Talma then proceeded to analyse his own practice, especially what might be termed "by-play", or silent acting, to elucidate the thought process of a character - another link with Kemble:

> "There are indeed certain occasions when the actor must needs meditate before putting into words what he feels within him or what his intelligence prompts. In such a case the actor must appear to think before speaking; he must, by means of pauses, seem to take time to consider what he is going to say, but he must also by his facial expression eke out those silences and, by his bearing and the play of his features, indicate that during such pauses his mind is deeply pre-occupied. Without such by-play these gaps in the delivery of his lines would seem merely a cold hiatus due rather to a lapse of memory than to any cogitation."

The necessity for the last comment draws attention to the audience's expectation of a continuous verbal performance, in the manner of an operatic score, as well as serving as an incidental reminder of the central position and function in France of the prompter's box. Talma expands on the element of silent acting:

> "There are also situations when a human being, deeply stirred, feels that his excess of emotion cannot wait for the slow combination of words. The feelings which sway him before his own voice can express them suddenly slip out in dumb show. Gesture, bearing, facial expression, must of necessity fore-stall words as the lightning flash precedes the thunder clap. This method heightens expression to a remarkable degree in that it lays bare a mind already deeply affected and impatient to declare itself by the most immediate means available. These artifices constitute

> what has properly been called dumb show, so essential a part of the art of acting and one so difficult to attain, to possess and to control; by it an actor conveys to his words a touch of everyday life, of truth itself, thus depriving it of any resemblance to something learnt by heart and recited."[24]

The words which Talma had to make use of were confined to the highly specialised vocabulary and artificial rhythms of tragic rhetoric - nature idealised; the bearing, gestures, facial expression - though equally "artifices" - were the means by which the actor could make contact with the nature of every day life.

Something of the restraint of Talma's acting is conveyed by Lady Morgan in her account of a performance of Britannicus, in which Mlle George played Agrippina and Talma her son Nero. Mlle George "went through a long speech of a hundred and ten lines with great clearness, elegance of enunciation, and graceful calmness of action". During the first seventy lines of this speech, Talma sat "a patient and tranquil auditor"; the little by-play, which was a notorious innovation, was not risked until towards the close of the speech. "It was then, however, exquisite, it was Nature. The constraint of forced and half-given attention, the languor of exhaustion, the restlessness of tedium, and the struggle between some little remains of filial deference and habitual respect, blending with the haughty impatience of all dictation, were depicted - not in strong symptoms and broad touches of grimace and action, - but with a keeping, a tact, a fidelity to Nature, indescribably fine. His transition of attitude; his playing with the embroidered scarf round his neck, his almost appearing to count its threads, in the inanity of his profound ennui, were all traits of the highest order of acting." Yet these delicate, restricted actions caused considerable controversy, so that Lady Morgan continued her account by describing the stir in the parterre as many a head searched "its classical recesses, for some example from tradi-

tional authority".[25]

A more influential critic was Mme de Staël. Exiled by Napoleon, she obtained permission to travel to Lyons from Coppet in 1809 to attend performances at the theatre where Talma was playing: her party included Benjamin Constant and Mme de Récamier. The occasion was a performance of Ducis's Hamlet. She wrote to Talma that he "surpassed perfection, even imagination. There is in that play, faulty as it is, a remnant of tragedy stronger than our own and your talent in the rôle of Hamlet appeared to me like the genius of Shakespeare, but without his lapses and homely touches, which of a sudden became what is noblest on earth." Interestingly, she discusses Talma in terms of creator rather than interpreter, as poet-artist: "it was a poetry of glances, of voice, of gesture, which no writer has yet achieved".[26] (Delécluze also recognized this quality of the artistic: "Of all the men who, in our time, have engaged themselves with art, Talma is without exception the one who has been the most completely and constantly an artist.")[27] In Mme de Staël's second letter, she used a phrase which seems to sum up Talma's unique impact, when she described his acting as "that astounding combination of French restraint and foreign energy".[28]

The performances she saw at Lyons furnished the substance of Chapter 27 of De l'Allemagne. The entire French edition of De l'Allemagne was destroyed by the Emperor's police. The London edition of 1813 finally reached Paris the following year at the Restoration. Mme de Staël's summary of Talma's art anticipated Stendhal and Guizot in appealing for a new dramaturgy: "This artist gives in profusion to French tragedy what, rightly or wrongly, the Germans claim it lacks, originality, and truth to nature. He knows how to portray foreign manners in the different plays he performs in, and no actor ventures more powerful effects by more simple means. In his method of declaiming he manages to combine with artistry

Shakespeare and Racine. Why should not dramatic authors strive equally to unite in their plays what Talma has so successfully combined in his style of acting?"[29]

The only person to approach Talma in terms of reputation was the actress Mlle Mars, in the distinct genre of "high" comedy drawn from both the traditional and modern repertory. Just as Talma continued to portray young tragic heroes in to his sixties, so Mlle Mars retained the roles of "ingénue", "grande coquette" and "amoureuse" to ages beyond reason, yet silenced most criticism by the youthful grace of her playing. The rigid conventions of casting offered few opportunities for Mars and Talma to appear together. One unusual occasion was in Le Cid d'Andalousie, by Pierre Lebrun, the author of the successful Marie Stuart. This play was a forerunner of the romantic drama of Hugo, Dumas and Vigny, incorporating exotic settings and minute detail about customs in thirteenth century Spain. In his introduction to the published play, Lebrun revealed that he had attempted to create a heroine whose lightness of manner would transport "high comedy into the tragic domain".[30] Mlle Duchesnois, who should by right and certainly her own expectation have played Estrelle, declaimed rather than spoke her lines; but Mlle Mars "who did not know how to declaim possessed, in addition to this great advantage, gifts to which Mlle Duchesnois could not pretend. She therefore appeared to me to be indispensable to my work....That was why I told the actors that without Mlle Mars Le Cid d'Andalousie could not be played."

The intention to merge comedy and tragedy, the demand for acting of a particular style, are, equally, pointers to the future. The play itself was unsuccessful, for a number of reasons, but an interesting experiment nonetheless. Le Journal de Paris listed among the causes of failure "the touches of everyday life that had been lavishly expended upon the principal characters and, above all, the multiplicity of useless detail";[31] the

Duchesse d'Abrantès noted that "For the first time the Comédie-Française gave voice to Romantic lines".[32] Delécluze, as always eager to see living demonstrations of the so-called question of "romantisme", was afforded great pleasure by Mlle Mars as a tragédienne, despite her faults. "Talma is excellent in his role; Mars acts divinely everything in the work which deals with everyday life. When the part calls for the actress to depict passion, she is betrayed by her manner and physical means,...in tragic moments she cannot express sufficient change through her voice or features. She lacks what Talma sometimes has to excess."[33]

Hazlitt, in Notes of a Journey through France and Italy, centres his comparison between the French and English styles of serious comedy around the accomplishments of Mlle Mars. He was struck at once by the excellence of the French school. "Their actors have lost little or nothing of their spirit, tact, or skill in embodying the wit and sense of their favourite authors. The most successful passages do not interfere with our admiration of the best samples of English acting, or run counter to our notions of propriety. That which we thought well done among ourselves, we here see as well or better done; that which we thought defective, avoided."[34] What makes Hazlitt's observations of particular value is his ability to see both French acting and dramatic writing as allied to, rather than distinct from, the English schools.

His portrait of Mars in Le Misanthrope is based upon perception of fine detail: "Her few first simple sentences - her 'Mon Ami' at her lover's first ridiculous suggestion, the mingled surprise, displeasure, and tenderness in the tone - her little peering eyes, full of languor and archness of meaning - the peaked nose and thin compressed lips, opening into an intelligent, cordial smile - her self-possession - her slightest gesture - the ease and rapidity of her utterance, every word of which is perfectly distinct...." He conceded that she was neither "handsome nor

delicately formed", and lacked both the "light airy grace" and the "evanescent fragility of appearance" of Miss Farren, the last English actress who shone in genteel comedy; but she had "more point and meaning, or more of the intellectual part of comedy".[35] Intelligence and taste were the hallmarks of Mlle Mars' acting; and the comments of Hazlitt above on her performance as Célimène indicate the delicate nature of her playing, and yet its total clarity: effects which were rare, and perhaps scarcely achievable, in the London patent theatres of the day. Another English observer, Captain Gronow, may be cited as evidence of Mlle Mars' "drawing-room" style of acting:

> "Her diction was perfect; and she possessed, above all other actresses, that knowledge of the stage, and that delicacy of touch, which gave just the right inflection to each point, and no more. In her acting there was never the slightest straining after effect, - or rather, I should say, the effect was produced without any apparent effort, - and she spoke her part just as a lady might make a witty, or piquant, or pathetic remark in her drawing-room: every movement was intensely studied, but seemed perfectly natural. Her voice was mellow and varied in its tones, without any of those sudden changes in vogue now-a-days, which seem more like ventriloquism than acting. There was a certain chaste reserve even in the scenes of passionate love, and propriety observed even in the most risqué passages. One was charmed, melted, touched, rather than powerfully moved."[36]

Mars' controlled, polite naturalism was the more remarkable for an English visitor because of the rarity of English actresses capable of playing "genteel" comedy. One senses, too, the pressure of contemporary manners as a touchstone for what stage acting should aim at.

Maurice Descotes sums up Mlle Mars' style in the following paragraph, which again emphasises the differences in repertory and in theatrical conditions between the English and French classical theatres of this period:

"The acting of Mlle Mars was 'un jeu de tête', rational and of a superior intelligence. It was in this respect that her talent was

limited. She portrayed brilliantly the stratagems of coquetterie; she could dismiss an importunate lover with inimitable disdain, put down a bore with the most civil impertinence. But witty roles suited her better than roles of feeling; she spoke words that came from the mind with perfect assurance, but was ill at ease with those which came from the heart."[37]

One further point from Hazlitt's notice, on the "ease and rapidity" of Mlle Mars' utterance, is worth comment. The French theatre made greater use of the prompter than the English theatre, so much so that proximity to the prompter's box could be a major factor in stage grouping. Watching the English theatre in Brussels in 1814, Jelgerhuis commented on the actors' speed of delivery, arising from their lack of dependence on the prompter.[38] Legouvé records that Firmin, who played Mlle Mars' young lover in Legouvé's Louise de Lignerolles in 1838 (the two had, incidentally, a combined age of a hundred and twenty-five) "when enacting a long scene at the far end of the stage, was obliged to have a second prompter somewhere within ear-shot".[39] Firmin was an extreme case; but Mars' fluency was equally unusual, stemming from long familiarity with many of the roles as well as from her intelligent, cerebral approach to acting. The greater naturalness such fluency lent to the performance was matched by a far greater flexibility in the speaking of comic verse than prevailed in tragedy. The style of declamation lends itself to reliance on the prompter. But Hazlitt found in the playing of Damas as the Misanthrope "a force and natural freedom which I had no conception of as belonging to the French stage. If they drawl out their tragic rhymes into an endless sing-song, they cut up their comic verses into mincemeat. The pauses, the emphasis, are left quite ad libitum, and are as sudden and varied as in the most familiar or passionate conversation."[40] This trend has affinities with the experiments of Kean to naturalise the rhythms of Shakespearean verse, and of Macready's striving, already quoted, for a "natural manly tone of

dialogue". Hazlitt found similarities in acting style between French comedy and English tragedy.

There were considerably more actresses of the first rank in France than in England during this period: Mlle Duchesnois, a perfectionist with a musical voice (too musical for Lebrun) who specialised in Racine's tragic queens and princesses; Mlle George, a more instinctive actress, warm and generous, at her best as Jocaste or Sémiramis. Each made her début at the Comédie-Française in 1802, initiating a rivalry which became more bitter as the years went by. Neither could be argued to represent a wholly distinctive style or school of acting. The most striking contrast to Mlle Mars and the classical style of acting was Marie Dorval.

Marie Dorval, the daughter of strolling players, acted as a child before studying for a time at the Conservatoire. Lafon, her teacher, tried to channel her towards comedy, but she did not possess the patience of her fellow-pupil, Frédérick Lemaître, and in 1818 abandoned formal studies, making her début at the Porte-Saint -Martin. There her models were interpreters of melodrama like Adèle Dupuis and Eugénie Sauvage, the former of whom was Pixérécourt's first choice as leading actress. Like them, she created a series of heroines all prone to appalling misfortunes; the essential requirement was, in Descotes' phrase, "to weep and to make others weep".[41] She was, in life and on stage, passionate and emotional. George Sand, though scarcely an objective commentator , wrote of her: "Everything was passion with her, whether it was motherhood, art, friendship, love or religion".[42] She had the ability to express that sense of passion through her features, her gestures, and her husky, rough voice. Gautier, summarising her achievements, described her in these terms: "Marie Dorval's talent lay in passion; it is not that she neglected art, but art came to her through inspiration; she did not calculate her playing gesture by gesture, she did not mark out her entrances and exits with chalk-marks:

she placed herself in the situation of the character she was playing and became that character entirely."[43]

Whether or not this is an accurate description of Marie Dorval's methods (and it seems at variance with the stories, for instance, of her carefully calculated slide down the staircase in Chatterton), there can be no doubt of the projected effect. One might argue, too, that the nature of the dialogue in many of her roles demanded that the actress emphasise feelings, and that she necessarily must utilise means other than the nuances of words and linguistic rhythms. Gautier lists some of the means she employed: cries, sobs, unusual intonations, tears so convincing that the context of the theatre was forgotten.[44] The contrast in scale with Hazlitt's catalogue of Mlle Mars' points ("the mingled surprise, displeasure, and tenderness in her tone") is immediately apparent. On being questioned about her role as Marie Jeanne (one of the suffering mothers she later came to specialise in) and how she created it, she simply replied: "I do not know; I have a child, I lose him; that's all".[45] The suffering of Marie Jeanne was expressed, as in almost all Dorval's roles, in prose. When she attempted a role written in verse for the first time in 1829 (Eléna in Marino Faliero), she found herself inhibited by the unnatural diction, unable to avoid over-emphasising the rhythm, constrained by the caesura. Her skill lay, not in making the artificial seem natural, but in naturalising the broad emotions and conventional language of melodrama.

On June 19th, 1827, Marie Dorval appeared for the first time with Frédérick Lemaître at the Porte-Saint-Martin in Trente Ans, ou la Vie d'un Joueur. The play had been written originally by Prosper Goubaux to demonstrate how redundant as a convention was unity of time, and completed for the stage by Victor Ducange. Lemaître played Georges de Germany, a gambler who is led by his failing through a succession of crimes culminating

in murder; Marie Dorval was his wife Amélie, portraying first an innocent sixteen-year-old girl, then a young grief-struck mother struggling on her son's behalf, and finally the utter despair of a woman reduced to beggary. The play's construction demanded versatility from each. But what was more remarkable was the economy of means employed by Lemaître and Dorval to achieve their effects; they shunned the usual exaggerations of the boulevard theatres for the simple, realistic style which each had hitherto employed relatively in isolation. Janin, an acute critic for all his tendency to elaboration, attributed to them "a complete revolution in the art of drama. The audience, used to the shrill tones of melodrama with its din of words and voice, all looked at one another in astonishment, moved and charmed by such simplicity and grace."[46]

Lemaître, like Dorval, was of a different generation to Talma and Mars. He was born in 1800, and had made his début in 1816 at the Variétés Amusantes, as the lion in a pantomime Pyrame et Thisbé. From there he progressed to the Funambules and the Cirque Olympique where, surrounded by tight-rope walkers and jugglers, he appeared in mimodrames and pantomimes dramatiques and learned the art of silent acting. At the same time he studied at the Conservatoire under Lafon, at whose prompting he applied to the Odéon, the second Théâtre-Français, in 1819: the only member of the selection committee of nine to support his candidature was Talma. The next year, however, he re-applied successfully, and for nearly three years remained in the company, though almost exclusively restricted to minor roles. As Descotes observed, at least he learned how to remain silent, and to master the art of attracting the audience's attention without saying a word. Returning to the boulevards, he was engaged at the Ambigu-Comique, and achieved an outstanding success as Robert Macaire in L'Auberge des Adrets. (Fig. 16) This three-act melodrama had little to commend it and was constructed around over-familiar motifs: the wayside inn setting, the

bandit-villain, the death-bed repentance, the abandoned child, the wrongly-accused and virtuous wife. Lemaître, enlisting the support of Firmin as Macaire's confederate Bertrand, decided to play his role lightly, with cynical humour, converting Macaire, for whom he devised an extravagant costume, into a cheerful immoralist. (In 1834, he collaborated in a sequel, Robert Macaire, but this time with an overt satirical intention.) The importance of his coup in L'Auberge des Adrets was his ability to turn a convention on its head, his refusal to be confined to established methods of interpretation within an over-worked genre. Lemaître's increasing confidence led him to such levels of improvisation and interpolation that he was rebuked by Charles Maurice in the Courrier des Théâtres. To prove the point that the play only succeeded because of the actors' irreverent approach, Lemaître obtained the manager's permission to play L'Auberge des Adrets seriously one night. The performance had to be abandoned.[47] There was no questioning the supreme talent of Lemaître and Dorval, or the potential of their style of acting. What was lacking was a repertory to complement it.

CHAPTER 2 : NOTES

1. E. Suddaby and P.J. Yarrow (eds.), Lady Morgan in France. Newcastle, 1971. pp.89-90.
2. William Hazlitt, Notes of a Journey through France and Italy. London, 1826. pp.50-1.
3. Hazlitt, Notes of a Journey through France and Italy, p.52.
4. Hazlitt, Notes of a Journey through France and Italy, pp.53-4. Compare the complaints of Pueckler-Muskau, Tour in England, Ireland, and France, in the years 1828 and 1829, vol.2, p.287, where he describes a "Greco-French tragedy, in which antique dresses vainly strove to convert Frenchmen into Greeks, in which the provincial hero Joanny vainly tried to exhibit a faint copy of the godlike Talma, and Duchesnois, who is now really 'au delà de la permission' ugly, with whining, antiquated and stony manner, vainly quivered out the end of every sentence with her hands in the air (also à la Talma), while all the rest exhibited a truly hopeless picture of mediocrity ..."
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7. For details about staging, I have relied on, especially, Marie-Antoinette Allevy, La Mise en scène en France dans la première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle. Paris, 1938.
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16. Delécluze, Journal, p.349.
17. See the account in Herbert F. Collins, Talma. London, 1964. p.45.
18. Delécluze, Journal, p.350.
19. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.5.
20. Delécluze, Journal, p.351.
21. Quoted in Collins, Talma, p.324.
22. New Monthly Magazine, 1826, vol.17, p.581.
23. Translation by Herbert Collins, Talma , p.353.
24. Collins, Talma, p.354.
25. Suddaby and Yarrow, Lady Morgan in France, p.93.
26. Mme de Staël, letter to Talma, July 4th, 1809, quoted in Collins, Talma, p.205.
27. Delécluze, Journal, p.354.
28. Mme de Staël, letter to Talma, July 8th, 1809, quoted in Collins, Talma, p.205.
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Chapter 3

THE ROMANTIC IMPULSE: SCOTT, BYRON AND THE THEATRE

Next to Shakespeare, Byron and Scott exercised the most pervasive literary influence upon French Romanticism and indeed upon French Romantic drama. Although numerous theories are advanced to explain the English Romantic writers' failure to write for the stage, none provides wholly convincing reasons in the cases of Byron and Scott, each of whom seemed to possess in abundance the qualifications to succeed. The need to revitalise and reform English drama was widely recognized. Byron himself realised that Scott possessed the necessary qualities. After his own election to the Sub-Committee of Management at Drury Lane, he contacted Scott, among others, inviting him to write for that theatre; Scott declined on his own account, but urged the merits of Maturin's tragedy Bertram (Bertram was eventually presented at Drury Lane on May 9th, 1816, with Kean in the title-role, though after Byron's departure for the continent).

The position of Scott in this regard is relatively simple. He expressed a strong interest in drama, but even stronger reservations about the contemporary state of the theatre, and especially the London theatre. In the essay on drama already quoted, he ascribed the low state of drama to the patent houses' monopoly, the excessive size of the theatres and the consequent emphasis on spectacle, and the degraded taste of the audience. These views did not deter him from writing five pieces in dramatic form: The House of Aspen, a translation of a German play offered to and rejected by John Philip Kemble; Halidon Hill, Macduff's Cross and Auchindrane, which do not seem to have been intended for public representation; and The Doom of Devorgoil, which arguably was, though Scott was content for it to be associated with Daniel Terry. Scott regularly attended performances at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, which he served as both patron and trustee. He

also became closely involved in promoting the work of Joanna Baillie, negotiating on her behalf with the Edinburgh manager, Henry Siddons, advising her about alterations and cuts, and taking the keenest interest in details of costume and stage presentation.

However, there were two telling arguments against Scott committing himself to write for the theatre. The first, and probably the over-riding one, was the lack of financial reward in Edinburgh, and the uncertainty of a proper financial return in London. "I could probably with great ease get your piece" (Bertram) "performed at the Edinburgh theatre," he wrote to Maturin. "But we are not strong in performers, and what is worse even in the event of a successful piece I fear little profit would accrue to the author. When I interested myself in bringing forward my friend Joanna Baillie's play of the family Legend, Harry Siddons made it quite plain to me that the success which attended that performance did not entitle me (considering the many heavy burdens upon the theatre) to make any claim on the part of Miss Baillie, which indeed she herself waved -"[2] Maturin eventually received £500 after the fortieth performance of Bertram, but that was a long time in coming: he was entitled to £300 after the ninth performance, which compared to £350 from John Murray for the copyright of the printed play. "I am very sorry the Theatrical managers do not behave liberally to you -" wrote Scott in commiseration. "Surely it is their deep interest to do so, and I really think their conduct scandalous."[3] Scott received a £5,000 advance for his then unwritten poem, The Lord of the Isles, in 1813. There could be little inducement to risk failure in the theatre when the rewards for published poetry and fiction were so substantial, particularly before Bulwer Lytton's Dramatic Authors Bill brought a measure of control in 1833.

Waverley, the first of the series of novels which would provide the substance of so many dramatic pieces for the romantic theatre, was

published anonymously in 1814, and Guy Mannering the following year. Scott was anxious to conceal his authorship of the Waverley novels, and that alone was sufficient to restrict his interest in adapting them for the stage. It seems likely, however, that he gave his friend the actor Daniel Terry assistance in re-arranging the plot and dialogue of Guy Mannering[4] for the theatre. "I fear the effects of a twice told tale," he wrote to Terry. "A great deal depends upon your keeping your own secret which is no deception after all for you have only received a very ugly lump of a thing. For my share in it Dumple it as you list so it pleases the public and serves you. It was a very rough combed thing and I had no time to make it better."[5] Scott's generosity on this occasion nearly led to his unmasking, for he contributed some verses to the adaptation which were known to be of his authorship. On future occasions he was more circumspect, although he sent Terry The Heart of Midlothian before publication so that Terry could gain a start on those rivals whom Scott referred to as "play-carpenters in ordinary". Scott retained a mild interest in his "theatrical grand-children"; he appreciated the acting of Charles Mackay as Bailie Nicol Jarvie and Liston as Dominie Sampson, and thought Rossini's Ivanhoe, which he saw in Paris on October 31st, 1826, "superbly got up" - and yet "It was an opera and of course the story greatly mangled and the dialogue in great part nonsense".[6] Scott did not take his fiction altogether seriously. He was sufficiently distanced from it to enjoy elements of its realisation in other forms, while fully conscious of their limitations. In fact, the later, more loosely structured novels provided as potent a source of material for scenarists and librettists as did the earlier, more tightly plotted works such as Rob Roy or Guy Mannering or Ivanhoe (14 versions by 1848). A.N. Wilson has suggested that many of Scott's later novels seem to dissolve "into a series of operatic scenes", and that Kenilworth is "not exactly speaking a novel. It is a poem set to prose, a series of scenes

divided by historical tableaux and pageants."[7] Scott presented the nineteenth century theatre with a scarcely exhaustible source of colourful, strongly designed scenes. These were capable of vivid realisation, as the complex plots and minutely observed characters were not. One of the most successful productions in Scott's lifetime was the ballet of Kenilworth (Figs 17-22) arranged by Deshayes in 1831 for Laporte, and produced at the King's Theatre; this version was the sixteenth identified by Ford,[8] including presentations devised for the Coburg, the Adelphi, the Surrey, the Olympic and Covent Garden. Yet the familiarity of the story and main incidents seemed in no way to detract from the audiences' pleasure; rather, it freed their imaginations, and allowed them to concentrate upon colour, line, and composition in an interpretation that was a refined form of melodrama. Scott's influence on the course of drama was, then, though pervasive in terms of source material and thematic approach, predominantly indirect and secondary.

The position of Byron is considerably more complex. He was by temperament more attuned to the drama than Scott, and would frequently employ it as a metaphor to comment on his own life, as when he wrote that "Lady Byron's farce" had put Werner out of his head. He frequented the theatre both in England and abroad; he was an appreciative and discerning critic of acting; and his position on the Sub-Committee of Drury Lane, though brief, brought him into daily and intimate contact with the problems of theatrical management. In English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, the most trenchant contemporary survey of the late Georgian stage, he exposed the theatre's unworthiness:

> Now to the Drama turn - Oh! motley sight!
> What precious scenes the wondering eyes invite!
> Puns, and a prince within a barrel pent,
> And Dibdin's nonsense yield complete content,
> Though now, thank Heaven! the Rosciomania's o'er,
> And full-grown actors are endured once more;

> Yet what avail their vain attempts to please,
> While British critics suffer scenes like these;
> While Reynolds vents his 'dammes!' 'poohs!' and 'zounds!'
> And common-place and common sense confounds?
> While Kenney's 'World', - ah! where is Kenney's wit?
> Tires the sad gallery, lulls the listless pit;
> And Beaumont's pilfer'd Caratach affords
> A tragedy complete in all but words?
> Who but must mourn, while these are all the rage,
> The degradation of our vaunted stage!

Byron called on Sheridan to

> Give, as thy last memorial to the age,
> One classic drama, and reform the stage.[9]

It was the replacement of tragedy and comedy by farce, spectacle and pantomime that Byron deplored. The re-opening of Drury Lane in 1812 gave Byron the opportunity to return to the theme in his Address; it was, also, an occasion when Byron's hypersensitivity to criticism or rejection was revealed, for he could only be persuaded to supply the Address (spoken, ironically, in view of later events, by Elliston) once he was assured that all other submissions would be rejected. Again, he appeals to the past: the magic of Shakespeare's name

> On the same spot still consecrates the scene,
> And bids the Drama be what she hath been:

and to Shakespeare's name Byron couples that of Sheridan, and as players those of Siddons and Garrick. The note of reform is strongly sounded: the "sinking stage", the "sickly taste", are to be countered by "the Drama's laws" and "reason's voice". Byron's hopes for the future make an interesting contrast with the manifestos of the French Romantic writers at the close of the next decade:

> The curtain rises - may our stage unfold
> Scenes not unworthy Drury's days of old!
> Britons our judges, Nature for our guide,
> Still may we please - long, long may you preside.[10]

Byron several times came close to committing himself to write for the theatre. On November 14th, 1813, he recorded in his journal: "This afternoon I have burnt the scenes of my commenced comedy."[11] Early the

following year he informed John Murray: "- Just before I left town Kemble paid me the compliment of desiring me to write a tragedy; I wish I could, but I find my scribbling mood subsiding -".[12] But his greatest opportunity to assist actively in the restoration of the English stage's vanished glory came in June, 1815 when he was elected to the Sub-Committee of Management at Drury Lane. It was not a simple task, as he wrote caustically to Thomas Moore, whom he had hoped to bring on to the committee: "all my new function consists in listening to the despair of Cavendish Bradshaw, the hopes of Kinnaird, the wishes of Lord Essex, the complaints of Whitbread, and the calculations of Peter Moore, - all of which, and whom, seem totally at variance. C. Bradshaw wants to light the theatre with gas, which may, perhaps (if the vulgar be believed) poison half the audience, and all the Dramatis Personae....Whitbread wants us to assess the pit another sixpence, a d----d insidious proposition - which will end in an O.P. combustion."[13] These somewhat cynical observations gradually gave way to much more positive attitudes, especially in Byron's efforts to solicit dramas and operas from poets such as Moore and Coleridge; one of his few successes in this direction was to promote the merits of Charles Maturin's Bertram. George Lamb agreed with Byron in thinking it "a very extraordinary production...capable - we hope - with some alterations and omissions - of being adapted even to the present state of the Stage - which is not the most encouraging to men of talent. - What it seems to want for this purpose is lowering (in some of the Scenes) - and this for the sake of the physical powers of the actor - as well as to relieve the attention of an audience - no performer could support the tone and effort of continual and sustained passion through five acts - the "dark Knight" must also be got rid of - and another catastrophe substituted - ... Perhaps you would allow my friend G. Lamb...to attempt the adaptation -"[14]

These remarks reveal Byron as acutely aware of the requirements of stage presentation, even of a stage which he was attempting to reform, or at least improve; and not at all apologetic about the need for adaptation. Byron was in the best possible position to assess the value of an even half-good tragedy; "you can have no idea what trash there is in the four hundred fallow dramas now lying on the shelves of D L," he had informed Coleridge when urging him to submit his tragedy for consideration. "I never thought so highly of good writers as lately - since I have had an opportunity of comparing them with the bad."[15] Byron, the least modest of men, can scarcely have overlooked himself as a candidate for honours. It was, indeed, during this year that he began Werner, which in its eventual form was to be both his most derivative and his most transparently stageable play.

Lady Byron's "farce", and the feared ostracism of London society, intervened; and Byron went into self-imposed exile. Once out of range of the English theatre, he proceeded to write eight works in dramatic form. These are Manfred, written between September 1816 and May 1817; Marino Faliero, written between April and July, 1820, and published in April, 1821 (though meditated for several years); an astonishing sequence of plays completed or (in the case of Werner) resumed during 1821 - Sardanapalus, The Two Foscari, Cain, Heaven and Earth, and Werner; and lastly, the unfinished The Deformed Transformed. Of these, only Marino Faliero was staged during his life, in apparent defiance of his wishes. Yet four others, none of which, according to Byron, was composed "with the most remote view to the stage",[16] were produced by 1837, with a considerable measure of success; indeed, Werner became part of the standard repertory of both Phelps and Irving as well as Macready. Sardanapalus, given twenty-three performances in Drury Lane in 1833-34, was revived by Charles Kean at the Princess' Theatre for ninety-three performances in 1853-54; while

Charles Calvert's adaptation, which opened at the Alexandra Palace, Liverpool on September 20th, 1875, received more than two thousand performances in the provinces and later at the Duke's Theatre in London - though by this stage there was only a tenuous connection with Byron's original text.

Byron's ambivalence towards the staging of Marino Faliero was complicated by his residence in Italy. His journal and letters provide a full but often enigmatic commentary on his reactions. As early as October, 1820, it is probable that Elliston wrote to Byron to enquire about the possibility of staging the tragedy, through the offices of Thomas Moore.[17] Then Murray, Byron's publisher, raised the subject early in the new year, prompting a volley of responses. "You say - 'let me know your pleasure in this' - I reply that there is no pleasure in it - the play is not for acting - Kemble or Kean could read it - but where are they? - Do not let me be sacrificed in such a manner....I know something of Harris and Elliston personally - and if they are not Critics enough to see that it would not do, I think them Gentlemen enough to desist at my request -."[18] That statement about Elliston, if sincere, is astonishingly naive; and the reference to Kemble or Kean reading the play, followed by the qualification "but where are they?", suggests that notions of performance were not wholly removed from Byron's thoughts. Indeed, even in the midst of emphatic professions of his intention to write for the closet he betrays a vivid understanding of the nature of the debased stage which he longed to reform. "Murray writes that they want to act the Tragedy of Marino Faliero; - more fools they, it was written for the closet. I have protested against this piece of usurpation, (which, it seems, is legal for managers over any printed work, against the author's will) and I hope they will not attempt it....I have written a fierce protest against any such attempt; but I still would hope that it will not be necessary, and that

they will see, at once, that it is not intended for the stage. It is too regular - the time, twenty-four hours - the change of place not frequent - nothing melodramatic - no surprises, no starts, nor trap-doors, nor opportunities 'for tossing their heads and kicking their heels' - and no love - the grand ingredient of a modern play".[19] Interestingly, Byron's respect for the unities, and his avoidance of the conventions of melodrama, is the reverse of the procedure which Dumas, and to a lesser extent Hugo, would follow within the decade. Byron, though inevitably influenced by Shakespeare, whom he regarded as the "worst of models",[20] strove to distance himself from the more sensational elements of Elizabethan dramaturgy. In his letter to Murray of January 11th, Byron expresses an even more potent argument against performance: "I will not be exposed to the insolences of an audience - without a remonstrance. - As thus -".[21] He then outlined a robust formal protest.

The fear of condemnation was clearly uppermost in Byron's mind. He quoted the opinion of Pope (given in Spence's Anecdotes) to Murray: "I had taken such strong resolutions against anything of that kind from seeing how much every body that did write for the Stage was obliged to subject themselves to the players and the town."[22] In 1815, he had commented on the damning of Mrs Wilmot's tragedy Ina that it was "a good warning not to risk or write tragedies. I never had much bent that way; but, if I had, this would have cured me."[23] He made no secret of this fear, stating in the published preface to Marino Faliero: "the trampling of an intelligent or of an ignorant audience on a production which, be it good or bad, has been a mental labour to the writer, is a palpable and immediate grievance..."[24]

The steps that Byron and his friends took to prevent public performance were unsuccessful. Kinnaird did not consider Marino Faliero a suitable acting play, and wrote later to Elliston about the injunction

issued at Murray's request: "I treated the matter with indifference, expressing my confidence that the chancellor could not grant it - and I considered he" (Murray) "was so acting, rather to discharge his duty to Lord Byron than with any hope of succeeding."[25] At one point, Byron proposed a limited edition of forty copies privately struck off for friends, in order to baulk Elliston, but this idea was not pursued.

The manoeuvres preceding the unauthorised production of Marino Faliero are worth describing in detail, since they provide clear evidence of the uneasy relationship between writers and the stage in England at this time. Murray had already successfully served an injunction on Thomas Dibdin, to prevent him opening his season at the Surrey theatre with the play; but he was apparently either unable or unwilling to stop Elliston from obtaining the play in proof sheets as they came off the press. Murray was by this point the copyright holder: Byron assigned the tragedy to him by a deed dated April 14th, 1821, in consideration of the sum of £1,050.[26] An acting version was certainly prepared before publication, though Elliston, through the agency of James Winston, was careful to observe the letter of the law:

> "April 21st: Marino Faliero published. Cut a copy and sent it by Tyson to East Sheen about three, Saw Larpent (the licenser) and he said he would send the answer, but he had not a doubt of procuring a licence by Mon. or Tuesday at farthest. Tyson bought two copies of Marino Saturday morning about eleven for twenty-four shillings."[27]

On April 24th, the licence came. Elliston announced, on playbills dated that day: "Those who have perused Marino Faliero will have anticipated the necessity of considerable curtailments, aware that conversations or soliloquies, however beautiful and interesting in the closet, will frequently tire in public recital. This intimation is due to the ardent admirers of Lord Byron's eminent talents, and will, it is presumed, be a sufficient apology for the great freedom used in the representation of this tragedy on the stage of Drury-Lane Theatre."[28] On the same day, "a

letter came from Murray requiring Marino not to be played because Lord Byron did not approve of its being acted".[29] On April 25th an injunction was obtained, restraining Elliston from presenting the play. Elliston immediately set off in pursuit of the Lord Chancellor, tracked him round London, and finally buttonholed him on his doorstep, where he persuaded him to suspend the injunction for one night. Murray, unaware of the suspension, published a handbill stating the legal position as he thought it, and this was distributed around the auditorium. Two days later there was a hearing in the Court of Chancery, and on April 28th an agreement was reached under which the play might be given again the following Monday, April 30th.[30]

There were seven performances in all, to decreasing houses. Public sympathy rested with the author, in that his explicit wishes had been so palpably ignored. Murray, as Kinnaird indicated, acted more out of a sense of duty to Byron than from any confidence of success; approval for Elliston's course of proceeding had been obtained from Byron's fellow Sub-Committee member in 1815, George Lamb. The protests ensured a muted response to the play itself; while the absence of Kean, and Elliston's defiant haste, limited any inherent merit the production might have held. Even so, Winston recorded on April 25th, "The tragedy went off very well."[31]

Before examining the critical reception of Marino Faliero, it is useful to take account of Byron's own views and judgements at a time when his thoughts were relatively free from anxiety about exposure before an audience. In response to a prediction from Murray that the play would not prove popular (not in itself an attitude to find much favour with Byron - "did I ever write for popularity?"), Byron defined his aim in a letter of February 16th, 1821: "It appears to me that there is room for a different style of the drama - neither a servile following of the old drama - which is a grossly erronious one - nor yet too French - like those who succeeded the older writers. - It appears to me that good English - and a severer

approach to the rules - might combine something not dishonourable to our literature. - I have also attempted to make a play without love. - And there are neither rings - nor mistakes - nor starts - nor outrageous ranting villains - nor melodrama - in it. All this will prevent its popularity, but does not persuade me that it is therefore faulty."[32] It is not clear to whom Byron is referring in the "too French" category, but the rigidity and verbal dullness of Rowe's Jane Shore or Addison's Cato may be the models he wished to avoid.

Byron was adamant that modern tragedy imitated the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists at its peril. In commenting on The Cenci to Shelley, he wrote that "besides that I think the subject essentially undramatic, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists as models."[33] (Shelley, in return, considered that Byron "fails in the drama. He is too abstract and diffuse." The reason for failure he ascribed to the achievement of Shakespeare: "Shakespeare is the lion in the path; he has done for the drama what the Greeks had done for sculpture - perfected it.")[34] Byron argued that the production of a great tragedy could only be done "by writing naturally and regularly - and producing regular tragedies like the Greeks - but not in imitation - merely the outline of their conduct adapted to our own times and circumstances - and of course no chorus -".[35] On the one hand was the "clear spring" of the Greeks, and such followers as Alfieri; on the other "those turbid mountebanks - always excepting B. Jonson - who was a Scholar and a Classic."[36] This clarity and austerity of intention remained unaltered throughout the subsequent composition of Sardanapalus and The Two Foscari: "My object has been to dramatize like the Greeks (a modest phrase!) striking passages of history, as they did of history and mythology. - You will find all this very unlike Shakespeare - and so much the better in one sense - for I look upon him to be the worst of models - though the most extraordinary of writers. - It has been my object to be as

simple and severe as Alfieri - and I have broken down the poetry as nearly as I could to common language."[37]

The principles which emerge from Byron's flow of comments are regularity and simplicity, a stricter observance of the unities, the omission of the conventions of melodrama, and a purge on excessively poetical language. It may be questioned why, if he was solely concerned with literature, Byron should so consistently refer to contemporary stage practice, explicitly or implicitly: why, for instance, that "of course no chorus" in a play written for the theatre of the mind? He was not opposed to performance of others' work - he was moved to tears by Alfieri's Mirra at Bologna. Outwardly, he shrank from having his own plays performed, partly because of the pain failure would bring, and partly because of the conduct of the contemporary English stage. He seemed to admit that his objections were not absolute in response to a letter from Kinnaird, informing him of Kean's arrival: "Kean is right to act de Montfort - I prayed him to do a hundred times in 1815. But I will have nothing to do with the Doge - why should he act it?....You are a fine fellow and my zealous friend and ally - also a very good Judge of dramatic effect - but surely the past experience shows that in the present state of the English Stage - no production of mine can be adapted to an audience."[38]

There remains the ambivalence of a writer constructing, not a dramatic poem like Manfred, but a series of recognizable, regular, historical tragedies whose style and decorum are a response to the faults of the staged dramas of the time, and whose dramatic language, deliberately made simple, could only properly be tested by the spoken voice. While Byron was still ignorant of Marino Faliero's stage failure - while, in fact, first reports of its failure had been superseded by misleading rumours of a certain success - he completed Sardanapalus and a substantial part of The Two Foscari, both dramas more obviously susceptible to stage performance

than their immediate predecessor. Indeed, many of the features which make Marino Faliero a somewhat rarified dramatic experience are absent from Sardanapalus which, apart from its excessive length, is an eminently stageable play. Byron's claim that Marino Faliero was transparently not written for the stage, though supported by several reviewers, was not universally accepted. The judgement of Goethe, to whom Byron dedicated Marino Faliero, carries weight. "If I were still superintendent of the theatre," he told Eckermann on February 24th, 1825, "I would bring out Byron's Doge of Venice. The piece is indeed long, and would require shortening. Nothing, however, should be cut out; but the import of each scene should be taken, and expressed more concisely. The piece would thus be brought closer together, without being damaged by alterations; and it would gain powerful effect, without essential loss of beauty."[39] Byron was fully aware that the text was too long: "It consists of 3,500 lines: a good acting play should not exceed 1500 or 1800."[40]

Regrettably, no scrupulous condensation such as Goethe proposed occurred before the first Drury Lane production. "We have said that Lord Byron's tragedy was performed, but we ought rather to have stated, that fragments, violently torn from that noble work, were presented to the audience," was the Times' observation.[41] As Byron later complained, "The manner in which it was got up was shameful. All the declamatory parts were left, all the dramatic ones struck out."[42] While suggesting that the plot's simplicity, one "source of gratification" in the closet, detracted "from the effect of the tragedy on the stage", the Times felt that the character of the Doge, played by Cooper, was decidedly Kean's: "Had he played it, the Doge of Venice would not have been so coldly received: he would have given life, and spirit, and energy to the scene."[43] There is no suggestion in the Times notice that the play was totally unsuited for the stage, which was the approach adopted by the Examiner on the grounds that:

"All characters whose passions are of an abstract quality, with whom our sympathies are not palpable and immediate, can appeal to the 'mind's eye' only." The Examiner proceeds to outline some of the reasons for this production's limited hold on the audience's imaginations: "We must not forget the Prompter, - no one was of greater importance, and he did his duty most unremittingly. But Mr Power could put no faith in whispers from the side scenes, and sat in judgment on the Doge, with Michel Steno at his back openly reading the part, which he, the grave Benintende, doled out, at second hand, in due solemnity."[44]

That the play failed in these circumstances is hardly surprising. That a critic such as Hazlitt, reviewing the printed play, could write that: "Marino Faliero is without a plot, without characters, without fluctuating interest, and without the spirit of dialogue", and complain that "It is not rough, Gothic, pregnant with past events..."[45] is a measure of the severe limitations within the tradition of English dramatic criticism and theory. Twenty years or so later, released from the pressure of Byron's current fame and the controversy surrounding the copyright issue, Macready proved that the play could hold an audience.

If Marino Faliero is mental theatre, then it is mental theatre in the senses that it is intellectually demanding, and designed to make an audience think, as Anne Barton has argued[46] in "A light to lesson ages", a powerful assertion of the merits of Byron's political dramas. "Recollect that it is not a political play - though it may look like it - it is strictly historical, read the history - and judge -",[47] Byron tried to reassure the deeply conservative Murray. But if it was not political, it was only not political in an overt sense; as Byron emphasised in another discussion of the same issue on September 29th, "I hate all things written like Pizarro to represent france England and so forth -".[48] The political element arose not from any broad correspondence between England

and Venice, but from the choice of subject: the play is concerned with "revolution, and the relationship between personal feelings and public causes",[49] and the playwrights whose work it brings to mind are Shakespeare and Brecht. If The Cenci often reads like an imitation of Webster, Marino Faliero uses Shakespeare like a sounding board, especially the Roman plays of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus, and to a lesser extent Macbeth. Anne Barton suggests that "this identification of a Venetian present with a Roman past is purposeful in ways that make it seem as though Byron's play were engaged in a dialogue with Shakespeare's, as though Marino Faliero were a sequel to Julius Caesar in a different mode."[50] This deliberate scheme of reference adds depth of perspective to Byron's play and gives it a richness unmatched in other English dramas of the time. Yet while there are abundant Shakespearean echoes, Byron has achieved the relationship without ever resorting to Shakespearean pastiche. The verse is refreshingly free from those traces of Gothic for which Hazlitt looked in vain. There are occasional inversions and archaisms; but the syntax is generally straightforward, the language clear and robust, the rhythm discreetly flexible.

In his preface to the play, Byron demonstrates a concern for historical fact that allies him superficially with the antiquarian impulses of the time, but which, more significantly, anticipates the interest in social and political structures of Brecht. Byron also admits that this concern for the accuracy of the play has been modified to enable him to promote unity in dramatic form: "I forgot to mention, that the desire of preserving, though still too remote, a nearer approach to unity than the irregularity, which is the reproach of the English theatrical compositions, has induced me to represent the conspiracy as already formed, and the Doge acceding to it; whereas, in fact, it was of his own preparation, and that of Israel Bertuccio." On the other hand, historically, "all the consulta-

tions took place in the palace"; had Byron followed this, "the unity would have been better preserved; but I wished to produce the Doge in the full assembly of the conspirators, instead of monotonously placing him always in dialogue with the same individuals."[51] These considerations emphasise how clearly Byron, while professing to be creating a theatre solely of the mind, was nevertheless concerned with an ideal but physical theatre of the future. Byron prefaces the scene, Act Three scene Two (The House where the Conspirators meet), with a preparatory outdoors scene between the Doge and Bertuccio which has been carefully visualised: "the Space between the Canal and the Church of San Giovanni e San Paolo. An equestrian statue before it. - A Gondola lies in the Canal at some distance."

In the soliloquy which begins this scene, the Doge refers to the presence of the church -

> "Tall fane!
> Where sleep my fathers, whose dim statues shadow
> The floor which both divide us from the dead,..."

and later, when Bertuccio has joined him, draws his attention to the Statue:

> "Doge: We <u>are</u> observed, and have been.
> Ber: We observed!
> Let me discover - and this steel -
> Doge: Put up;
> Here are no human witnesses: look there -
> What see you?
> Ber: Only a tall warrior's statue
> Bestriding a proud steed, in the dim light
> Of the dull moon.
> Doge: That warrior was the sire
> Of my sire's fathers, and that statue was
> Decreed to him by the twice rescued city:-
> Think you that he looks down on us or no?
> Ber: My lord, these are mere phantasies; there are
> No eyes in marble."

The statue which stands before the Church of San Giovanni e San Paolo is not in fact of a Faliero, but of Bartolemeo Colleoni; the ancestral doges were not buried in the stated church, as Byron informed Murray.[52] The use of the church and the statue to point up the conflict within the Doge,

between his duty to the city and his allegiance to the patricians, the drawing of the sword "in the dim light of the dull moon", the tolling of midnight with which the scene closes - all these belong to the physical stage; and any impact they may convey in the mind depends largely on a reader's general experience of the kind of dramatic effects achieved by stage performance. It is not surprising that Elliston, and Macready later, responded to the potential of scenes like this. It is, in fact, those scenes which are least "regular", in the last three Acts, which are the most effective both as drama and literature. The first two Acts consist of a sequence of dialogues, including one between the Doge's young wife Angiolina and a confidante Marianna which is especially static; the speeches are lengthy, repetitious; the exposition a little monotonous: these Acts in particular would benefit from Goethe's suggestion of compression. Act Five contains the trial of the conspirators, and the execution of the Doge; the arguments are rehearsed again, perhaps at too great a length, but here the mise-en-scène contributes several powerful effects. Once more, one may detect a contradiction between Byron's theatrical instincts and his stated literary purpose. Act Five scene Three is set in "The Court of the Ducal Palace; the outer gates are shut against the people. - The Doge enters in his ducal robes, in procession with the Council of Ten and other Patricians, attended by the Guards, till they arrived at the top of the 'Giants' Staircase'; the Executioner is stationed there with his sword." These descriptions read like an open invitation to a stage director; and at the scene's close, Byron seems to have stage conventions clearly in mind when the Doge invites the death blow:

> "Doge: Slave, do thine office!
> Strike as I struck the foe! Strike as I would
> Have struck those tyrants! Strike deep as my curse!
> Strike - and but once!
> (The Doge throws himself upon his knees, and as the
> Executioner raises his sword the scene closes.)"

When Macready produced the play, he invented additional action to conclude the play. His prompt-book records:

> "the voice of Angiolina is heard. She pushes on exclaiming:
> Angiolina: I will not be with-held; my lord, my husb -:
> The Senators throw themselves before the Doge as the sword of the Executioner descends, - the bell tolls - and Angiolina shrieks and falls.
> THE CURTAIN DESCENDS RAPIDLY"[53]

The Macready variation is probably the kind of treatment Byron feared at the hands of the Speculating Managers; in fact, he provides an entirely dramatic but most unusual commentary on the execution by his Act Five Scene Four, which takes the "audience" marginally back in time, distancing us from the execution as it is described by the citizens:

> "First Cit: One has approached the Doge, and now they strip
> The ducal bonnet from his head -"

until a Chief of the Ten appears with a bloody sword, waves it thrice before the People, and exclaims:

> "Justice hath dealt upon the mighty Traitor!"

and one of the crowd exclaims as the gates are opened and the people rush in:

> "The gory head rolls down the Giants' Steps!"

Byron is here attempting something much more complex than the somewhat predictable sequence organized by Macready at the close of the previous scene; the dramatic referents are Shakespearean, and Greek, and Byron ensures that the play ends on an unmistakeable social and political note - as, indeed, it began, with the question of Steno's trial, and the central issue of justice. What the work possesses pre-eminently is a striking unity of impression, the quality singled out by Guizot as "the very essence of Shakespeare's great conceptions".[54] As Goethe remarked, "In this play we quite forget that Lord Byron, or even an Englishman, wrote it. We live entirely in Venice, and entirely in the time when the action takes place. The personages speak for themselves, and from their own condition, without

having any of the subjective feelings, thoughts, and opinions of the poet."[55] Goethe is exaggerating; the play is unmistakably Byronic. But it is remarkably free from any overlay of contemporary theatrical and verbal convention.

Byron's achievement of unity of impression, his creation of a convincing Venetian frame of reference, and, more than anything, the sense of intellectual concentration which pervades the play, distinguished his work from contemporary English tragedy. The Regency theatre was a physical theatre of spectacle and action, dominated by individualistic actors. Byron was endeavouring to create a theatre of ideas, which fitted more easily, perhaps, into the French tradition. Elliston, responding to the strength of Byron's concept, offered the facile solution of savage cutting; Goethe proposed compression. The difficulty of giving Marino Faliero appropriate stage life may be gauged by Macready's long-drawn-out wrestling with the problem. Byron's ambition to reform English drama, and the nobility of his dramatic concepts, were in attune with Macready's high-minded inclinations. "Elstree, July 24: Finished the perusal of Sardanapalus, which, for the fourth time, I think, I have examined on its capabilities for undergoing adaptation. It might have been an acting play, but it is too monotonous, passionless, and devoid of action, I fear, to satisfy an English audience. My whole evening has been spent in revolving the possibility of turning it to a representable form, and of considering the effect of his other plays. I reluctantly conclude upon abandoning the hope of them."[56] In 1834, Bunn's invitation to open the Drury Lane season in Manfred alarmed him: "I see no chance for the success of Manfred - it is, as I observed, not a monodrama, but a monologue; splendid as the poetry is, it is not at all dramatic."[57] The latter judgement is absolute; that on Sardanapalus qualified by the phrase "to satisfy an English audience". Nevertheless, Macready began to study the latter part until, dissatisfied

with Frederick Reynolds' version, he "determined, contrary to my original intention, of offering such benefit as my advice could yield towards the play...".[58] In typical Bunn fashion, reminiscent of Elliston, the play was presented after only two full rehearsals, and ran for twenty-three nights, though perhaps more on account of the impressive scenery and climactic bonfire than the merits of the production as a whole.

Macready's interest in Marino Faliero was also revived at this period: "Read Marino Faliero, proposed to be acted by Bunn, and again came to the conclusion that, abounding, as it does, in beautiful poetry and noble sentiment, it drags along from want of action and interest. Read the Foscari, which seems to me capable of being made much more dramatic - but still it is not enough."[59] On December 8th, and February 12th, 1836 he re-read the play, the second time on Bunn's prompting: its qualities clearly drew him, for in August he was once more perusing it "with the hope of finding it adaptable".[60] When Macready became manager of Covent Garden, the necessity of selecting suitable tragedies for the national theatre led him to begin work on an acting version, on November 12th, 1837. He did produce The Two Foscari ("was called for at the end of the tragedy and received by the whole house standing up and waving handkerchiefs with great enthusiasm"),[61] and on April 3rd, 1839, considered Marino Faliero for his farewell benefit. Finally, on May 20th, 1842, for his benefit at Drury Lane, the long contemplated production was staged, after weeks of personal preparation - "The whole evening to Marino Faliero, which improves on me"[62] - and a gradual realisation that the play promised to act well. The entry for May 20th recorded:"Acted Marino Faliero in parts very well; the interest of the play grew upon the audience, and the curtain fell upon the death of Faliero with their strong sympathy."[63] The reception was sufficiently encouraging for Macready to add the part to his touring repertory, playing it in Dublin during the summer, and reviving it the following season at

Drury Lane.

The critical comments were in marked contrast to the dismissals of twenty years before. The Examiner, though stressing that the play had serious faults, admitted that "They were never less apparent than in this representation, where the best dramatic taste had directed whatever of arrangement or omission the stage required"; the "appointments of the stage were admirable and most Venetian". The Times widened the discussion to analyse the particular kind of drama under review: "It is right occasionally to try if a public can be excited by a drama depending on thought, language, and construction...". It suggested that some of the enthusiasm was for Macready himself, as actor and manager, but considered that the play would bear occasional repetition: "whether it is equally adapted to a general public of so mixed a character as must be found in the great metropolis is another affair. A mixed public is alive enough to the theatrical, but it is another matter to be satisfied with the simply dramatic." The review praised the whole cast, which included Helen Faucit as Angiolina, Anderson as Lioni, and Phelps as Bertuccio. As for Macready's adaptation, the original text had been "very freely cut down; indeed, in some cases rather too freely", as well as undergoing some transposition and addition: "at the end the Duchess rushes in and falls senseless as the sword is raised over her husband's head, - an addition that is no improvement, as it makes a common-place end, and interrupts the solemnity of the execution."[65] This interpolated ending of Macready is an obvious replacement of the dramatic by the theatrical; nor could Macready temperamentally allow the conclusion to be dominated by "minor" characters, even supernumeraries. Nevertheless, both the production and the responses demonstrate that Marino Faliero is effective on the stage, and indicate that Byron's experiments in dramatic form were potentially revolutionary, even within his own age - though it is understandable that the more

experimental structure of Cain required the vision of Stanislavsky or Grotowski to accomplish its stage realisation, in the same way as it was hard for Goethe's contemporaries to appreciate the full dramatic values of Faust in its entirety. The three regular historical tragedies, however, all effectively directed by Macready, are much closer to the consciousness of the age. Byron, in order to draw closer to Nature, strove not only to present his characters and their concerns accurately, truthfully and historically, and to break down the poetry as nearly as he could to "common language", but also to avoid the artificial theatrical conventions and motifs of

"The degradation of our vaunted stage!"

Anne Barton has argued that "It was really Byron's touchiness, his morbid fear of failure, which led him to guard tragedies which he could openly refer to as 'experiments' or 'reforms' against the terrible risk of performance"; and that if Marino Faliero had succeeded - which, if Kean had been available, it might have done even in 1821 - he would have "settled happily into his new role as a practising playwright".[66] It was also, perhaps, his patrician arrogance which recoiled from the methods of melodrama, pantomime and spectacle towards the austere purity of the classical unities:

> "Though women weep, and hardest hearts are stirr'd,
> When what is done is rather seen than heard,
> Yet many deeds preserved in history's page
> Are better told than acted on the stage; ....
> True Briton all beside, I here am French -
> Bloodshed 'tis surely better to retrench;
> The gladiatorial gore we teach to flow
> In tragic scene disgusts, though but in show;
> We hate the carnage while we see the trick,
> And find small sympathy in being sick." (Hints from Horace)[67]

Byron's experience of the theatre fell in a period when stage effects were relatively crude. According to Macready, the conflagration in Sardanapalus was "always laughed at" in London[68] though, if true, this did

not detract from the play's power to attract an audience. However, it is once again necessary to separate stage practice from Byron's original concept, and to note that the author indicates that Myrrha should "fire the pile" on the play's penultimate line:

> "Myrrha: 'Tis fired. I come.
> (As Myrrha springs forward to throw herself into the flames, the Curtain falls.)"

The direction in which stage practice pushed the play is indicated by the following description of the catastrophe:

> "Myrrha lights the pile, then joins Sardanapalus, who has mounted his burning throne, and they are both soon involved in flames, and overwhelmed by the ruins of the falling palace. The walls give way, and open a view of Nineveh in one general blaze, and the whole city is red hot in the shortest possible time...."

The Morning Post recognized the irony. The fire was "a fine scenic display for a pantomime; but how would Byron have treated the burst of applause which it elicited?"[69]

Nevertheless, for most critics the visual realisation of the final scene was impressive in concept. The Examiner praised it as "worthy of the imagination of MARTIN and the execution of STANFIELD",[70] and the Athenaeum also emphasised the connection with Martin:

> "The burning itself, and the disappearance of Sardanapalus and Myrrha were capitally managed, and drew down shouts of applause. There was rather too much black smoke in front, which in some measure marred the effect of the discovery of the burning city; but this may be easily obviated in future. We believe we need not inform our readers, that the last scene is a copy by Mr Stanfield, from Mr Martin's picture of 'The Fall of Nineveh'."[71]

These associations have been fully explored by Martin Meisel, who suggests that Martin's picture (1828) "drew some of its initial inspiration from Byron's Sardanapalus, discernible in the foreground melodrama."[72] The same scale of visual representation was deployed in Bunn's production of Manfred on October 29th, 1834, when the Grieves were responsible for the

scenery: "the Jungfrau Mountains, the Cataract of the Lower Alps, and a Terrace of Manfred's Castle are exquisite pictures, the Hall of Arimanes, a copy of Martin's Pandemonium was terrifically grand."[73] (Fig.23) Meisel characterises these experiments as the nineteenth century stage's "insistent attempt to translate the sublime into the spectacular".[74] The impulse was shared by the French stage, and the connection with Martin was made by, among others, Gautier: "the 'Biblical enormities sketched by Martynn'".[75]

Byron's conflicting views on the stage emerge vividly in Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron. Medwin arrived in Pisa on November 20th, 1821, so that the cool reception of Marino Faliero as both acted and literary drama was fresh in Byron's mind. His bitterness on the subject spills over into several sweeping and injudicious generalisations about Shakespeare and the Elizabethans:

> "Shakespeare's Comedies are quite out of date; many of them are insufferable to read, much more to see. They are gross food, only fit for an English or German palate; they are indigestible to the French and Italians, the politest people in the world."[76]

Such opinions illustrate how temperamentally distant was Byron from the taste and atmosphere of the English theatre as represented by Drury Lane, indeed from the collaborative aspects of the playwright's art:

> "When I first entered upon theatrical affairs, I had some idea of writing for the house myself, but soon became a convert to Pope's opinion on that subject. Who would condescend to the drudgery of the stage, and enslave himself to the humours, the caprices, the taste or tastelessness, of the age? Besides, one must write for particular actors, have them continually in one's eye, sacrifice character to the personating of it, cringe to some favourite of the public, neither give him too many nor too few lines to spout, think how he would mouth such and such a sentence, look such and such a passion, strut such and such a scene."[77]

Within the caustic tone can be detected a highly sensitive understanding of the playwright's and the actor's task, and the impulse to express himself

in a theatrical mode. Medwin gives an account of a projected private staging of Othello, with Byron as Iago. Even in discussing the circumstance of the handkerchief, Byron returned to the subject of his own play:

> "The handkerchief is the strongest proof of love, not only among the Moors, but all Eastern nations: and yet they say that the plot of 'Marino Faliero' hangs upon too slight a cause."[78]

Another indication of Byron's theatrical inclinations was his appreciation of acting style. Mrs Siddons was for him the "beau idéal of acting...When I read Lady Macbeth's part, I have Mrs Siddons before me, and imagination even supplies her voice..."[79] He could conceive "nothing equal to Kemble's Coriolanus; and he looked the Roman so well, that even 'Cato', cold and stiltish as it is, had a run. That shows what an actor can do for a play! If he had acted 'Marino Faliero', its fate would have been very different."[80]

There seems a note of regret at the unfulfilled potential of Byron's drama. Fear of failure, temperamental incompatibility, a theatre in decline, and his own geographical location, impelled him reluctantly towards a non-practical drama. There is something ironic in the circumstances which drove Byron and Shelley out of a relatively stable England; while the volatile political atmosphere in France was more able to accommodate the literary and artistic manifestos of the Romantics. Dumas, Vigny, Hugo may, like Byron, have protested at the tyrannies and idiosyncrasies of the theatrical world; but they had, or acquired, the ability to manoeuvre within them, and indeed at times to turn them to their own advantage. Byron's idea of the natural as revealed in his drama belongs to both an earlier and a later age. Yet the nature of the works themselves remains essentially theatrical, and they constitute a major dramatic exploration of some of the more complex political, intellectual and aesthetic concerns of the age.

CHAPTER 3 : NOTES

1. See Chapter 1, note 4. Scott's early interest in drama led him to translate some five plays from German, including Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen, published in March, 1799.

2. Scott, letter to Charles Maturin, May 29th, 1814 in The Correspondence of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Robert Maturin, ed. F.E. Ratchford and W.H. McCarthy. Austin, 1937. p.28.

3. Scott, letter to Charles Maturin, July 22nd, 1816, Correspondence of Scott and Maturin, p.63.

4. See Richard Ford, Dramatisations of Scott's Novels, Oxford, 1979. Ford identifies six adaptations of Guy Mannering before 1848.

5. Scott, letter to Daniel Terry, January 26th, 1816 in Letters of Sir Walter Scott, ed. H.J.C. Grierson. 12 vols. London, 1932-7. Vol.3, p.169.

6. October 31st, 1826, in The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, ed. W.E.K. Anderson. Oxford, 1972. p.226.

7. A.N. Wilson, The Laird of Abbotsford. Oxford, 1980. p.142. The relationship between Scott's novels and the theatre is discussed by Christopher Worth in "Techniques and Uses of Landscape Description in the British Novel 1700-1830, with Special Reference to Scott", Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1981. Worth quotes two letters of particular relevance, one when Scott was working on Kenilworth: "I ... should like indeed to know anything that occurs to you about the village of Cumnor, its situation, etc. I like to be as minutely local as I can." (Letters of Sir Walter Scott, vol.6, pp.265-6); the other is a comment on The Doom of Devorgoil: "the story admits of the highest degree of decoration,both by poetry, music, and scenery....The ghosts' banquet, and many other circumstances, may give great exercise

to the scene-painter and dresser." (Letters of Sir Walter Scott, vol.4, pp.405-6.) Worth comments (p.262): "One wonders how much theatrical analogy lies hidden in the presentation of set-piece scenic spectacles common in his work."

8. Ford, Dramatisations of Scott's novels, p.29.

9. Byron, Poetical Works, ed. F. Page, corrected by J.D. Jump. Oxford, 1970. "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers", p.120, lines 560-75, 584-5. Further Byron quotations will be taken from this edition.

10. Byron, Poetical Works, "Address, spoken at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, October 10th, 1812," pp.66-7, lines 23-4, 70-3.

11. Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand. 12 vols. London, 1973-82. vol.3, p.205.

12. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 22nd, 1814, Letters and Journals, vol.4, p.37.

13. Byron, letter to Thomas Moore, June 12th, 1815, Letters and Journals, vol.4, pp.296-7.

14. Byron, letter to Charles Maturin, December 22nd, 1815, Letters and Journals, vol.4, p.336.

15. Byron, letter to S.T. Coleridge, October 18th, 1815, Letters and Journals, vol.4, p.319.

16. Byron, Poetical Works, Preface to Sardanapalus, p.453.

17. See Christopher Murray, Robert William Elliston, Manager. London, 1975. pp.95-6. Elliston was the probable recipient of a letter from Thomas Moore, November 16th, 1820:

> "I forwarded your letter to Lord Byron, but I fear that your hopes about his tragedy will be disappointed, for it has been some time in Murray's hands, and, from what I can understand, is neither fit nor indeed intended for representation." Letters of Thomas Moore, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden. 2 vols. Oxford, 1964. vol.2, p.486.

18. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 11th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, pp.60-1.

19. Byron, Journal, January 12th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, pp.22-3.

20. Byron, letter to John Murray, July 14th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.152.

21. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 11th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.59.

22. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 11th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.61.

23. Byron, letter to Thomas Moore, April 23rd, 1815, Letters and Journals, vol.4, pp.290-1.

24. Byron, Poetical Works. Preface to Marino Faliero, p.408.

25. Douglas Kinnaird, letter to Robert Elliston, reproduced in George Raymond, Memoirs of Robert William Elliston, 2 vols. London, 1844. vol.1, pp.272-5.

26. See Raymond, Memoirs of Elliston, vol.1, pp.267-75; and The English Reports. London, 1910. Vol.106, pp.1331-2. On Friday, May 3rd, 1822, the Court of King's Bench heard the case, which the Lord Chancellor had sent for an opinion. On behalf of the defendant, Elliston, Adolphus argued that, in the case of a theatrical exhibition, "Persons go thither, not to read the work, or to hear it read, but to see the combined effect of poetry, scenery, and acting. Now of these three things, two are not produced by the author of the work; and the combined effect is just as much a new production, and even more so than the printed abridgement of a work." The Court's opinion was "that an action cannot be maintained by the plaintiff" (Murray) "against the defendant for publicly acting and representing the said tragedy, abridged in manner aforesaid, at the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane, for profit."

27. Selections from James Winston's Diaries 1819-1827, ed. A.L. Nelson and G.B. Cross. London, 1974. p.29.
28. Playbill, British Library.
29. James Winston's Diaries, p.29.
30. See Raymond, Memoirs of Elliston, vol.1, pp.267-75.
31. James Winston's Diaries, p.29.
32. Byron, letter to John Murray, February 16th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.78.
33. Byron, letter to Shelley, April 26th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.103.
34. E.J. Trelawny, Records of Shelley, Byron and the author. 2 vols. London, 1878. Vol.1, p.33.
35. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 4th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.57.
36. Byron, letter to John Murray, January 4th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.57.
37. Byron, letter to John Murray, July 14th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, p.152.
38. Byron, letter to Douglas Kinnaird, September 13th, 1821, Letters and Journals, vol.8, pp.208-9.
39. Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret, trans. John Oxenford. London, 1874. pp.112-3.
40. Thomas Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, 1st ed., London, 1824. Quoted from the edition of E.J. Lovell, Jr., Princeton, 1966, p.119.
41. The Times, April 26th, 1821.
42. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, p.120.
43. The Times, April 26th, 1821.
44. Examiner, April 29th, 1821, pp.265-6.
45. Examiner, May 6th, 1821, pp.285-6.

46. Anne Barton, "'A light to lesson ages': Byron's Political Plays", pp.138-162 in Byron: Symposium, ed. J.D. Jump. London, 1975.
47. Byron, letter to John Murray, August 31st, 1820, Letters and Journals, vol.7, p.168.
48. Byron, letter to John Murray, September 29th, 1820, Letters and Journals, vol.7, p.184.
49. Barton in Byron: Symposium, p.145.
50. Barton in Byron: Symposium, p.145.
51. Byron, Poetical Works. Preface to Marino Faliero, p.408.
52. Byron, letter to John Murray, October 12th, 1820, Letters and Journals, vol.7, p.201.
53. Macready promptbook, Folger Shakespeare Library. Quoted in Alan S. Downer, The Eminent Tragedian William Charles Macready. Cambridge, Mass., 1966. p.250.
54. François Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times. London, 1852. p.156.
55. Conversations of Goethe, p.453.
56. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.51.
57. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.165.
58. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.90.
59. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.225.
60. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.341.
61. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.456.
62. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.166.
63. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.171.
64. Examiner, May 21st, 1842, p.325.
65. The Times, May 21st, 1842.
66. Barton, in Byron: Symposium, p.139.
67. Byron, Poetical Works. "Hints from Horace", pp.132-3, lines 265-8, 271-6.

68. Macready, letter to George Macready, August 10th, 1832. Princeton University Library. Quoted by Downer, Eminent Tragedian, p.236.

69. Morning Post, April 11th, 1834.

70. Examiner, April 13th, 1834, p.231.

71. Athenaeum, April 12th,1834, p.276.

72. Martin Meisel, "The Material Sublime: John Martin, Byron, Turner, and the Theater", pp.211-32 in Images of Romanticism, ed. K. Kroeber and W. Walling. New Haven, 1978. p.222.

73. Unidentified review, Enthoven Collection, Theatre Museum. Quoted by Meisel in Images of Romanticism, p.221.

74. Meisel in Images of Romanticism, p.212.

75. Théophile Gautier, Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans, vol.2, p.309.

76. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, p.94.

77. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, p.93.

78. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, pp.133-4.

79. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, p.138.

80. Medwin, Conversations of Lord Byron, p.135.

Chapter 4

THE ENGLISH THEATRE IN FRANCE

The well-documented visit of an English company to Paris in September, 1827 made so powerful an impact partly through a happy incident of timing, but partly because the ground had been thoroughly prepared. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars formed a barrier to cultural exchange, though not so absolute as might be supposed: the Treaty of Amiens, for instance, marked an eighteen-month period during which many English visitors travelled to Paris anxious to judge the effects of the Revolution and to see the First Consul in person; while the enforced residence in England of many French émigrés encouraged cross-fertilisation. Napoleon's abdication inaugurated a period of intense English interest in France, which was certainly reciprocated in terms of fashion and literature (especially in the persons of Scott and Byron), and a more restrained flow of French visitors to London and England - the French tended to be more selective about the value and extent of English culture when viewed at close quarters.

The first theatrical exchange of note was the English company gathered by Penley which appeared first in Amsterdam in May, 1814 in the German theatre (including a production of Hamlet on May 23rd), and later presented a season at the Théâtre de la Monnaie and the Théâtre du Parc at Brussels.[1] The quality of acting and presentation was uneven; John Junius Booth, who was in the company, referred slightingly to Penley's "butcheries" of Shakespeare. But on September 6th, Mrs Jordan appeared as Violante in The Wonder; and on September 22nd, Charles Kemble arrived, appearing as Hamlet on September 26th and October 8th (with Mrs Charles Kemble - formerly Maria Theresa Du Camp - as Ophelia) and then as Romeo, both roles he would later repeat in Paris. During the war, Amsterdam and

Brussels had received numerous visits from Talma, both with the Comédie-Française under the imperial command, and independently. The Belgians, accustomed to the French repertory and style of acting, commented on the strength of acting in the death scene by Kemble, and, significantly, on the construction of English drama: "In the English plays, a great many changes of scenery: the stagehands are kept as busy as the actors."[2]

Penley, who also mounted seasons at Boulogne and Calais, sought a venue in Paris. His approach to J.T. Merle, the director of the Porte-Saint-Martin, was finally agreed by the authorities, and on July 31st, 1822 the season opened with Othello. Everything except the idea was wrong: the company was weak, there was no well-known actor or actress, the publicity was tactlessly worded (as well as misleading) and the choice of play dangerous. If Talma the year before had had difficulty in presenting Scylla in bed at the Théâtre-Français, how much more would second-or third-rate English actors have in convincing French spectators of the propriety of the Moor suffocating Desdemona in full view of the audience? Penley may have been unfortunate in that chauvinism allied to cultural shock created violent hostility, with Shakespeare seen as "un lieutenant de Wellington".[3] It was impossible to complete the performance, and The School for Scandal two days later brought no better results. Yet something was salvaged from the chaos. The company gave a series of performances in a minor concert hall in the rue Chantereine to a small subscribing audience. The Shakespearean part of the repertory included Othello again, Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet and Richard III. Many of the Comédie-Française attended, including Talma and Mlle Mars. Stendhal exploited the occasion to predict that the bell was tolling for the end of Classicism.

During the five years which elapsed before the 1827 season, the debate between the exponents of Classicism and Romanticism used the plays of Shakespeare as primary material for analysis. One detailed and

influential essay in fact preceded the 1822 season: this was Etude sur Shakespeare by François Guizot, published in 1821 as the introduction to a thorough revision of Le Tourneur's translation: Oeuvres Complètes de Shakespeare.[4] Guizot was responsible for thirteen of the plays; his quota included Othello, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Richard III. M. de Barante translated Hamlet, Macbeth was unsigned, and the remainder was the responsibility of Amédée Pichot, noted for his translations of Byron and Scott.

Guizot's criticism, quoted below in the translation which appeared in 1852, Shakespeare and his Times, is, though lacking in the brilliant insights of Stendhal, infinitely more consistent and sensitive to the particular nature of a dramatic work. The concept he seeks to define and exemplify is that of unity: "Unity of impression, that prime secret of dramatic art, was the soul of Shakespeare's great conceptions, and the instinctive object of his assiduous labour, just as it is the end of all the rules invented by all systems. The exclusive partisans of the classic system believed that it was impossible to attain unity of impression, except by means of what are called the three unities. Shakespeare attained it by other means."[5] Guizot proceeds to demonstrate how, in Shakespeare's best work, unity of impression is achieved from the point of view of the spectator by Shakespeare's exposition of a unifying dramatic idea. "It is...by a single impression, that Shakespeare, at least in his finest compositions, takes possession, at the very outset, of our thought, and, by means of our thought, of space also. Beyond the magic circle which he has traced, he leaves nothing sufficiently powerful to interfere with the effect of the only unity of which he has need. Change of fortune may exist in reference to the persons of the drama, but never to the spectator."[6] Guizot makes an interesting distinction between the historical plays, where he suggests Shakespeare "multiplies improbabilities

and impossibilities to conceal the flight of time" and the finest tragedies where "he allows it to pass without the slightest notice"; as an example of this, and of true unity of impression, he cites Macbeth, "the true type of his system", and the sequence of scenes in which Macbeth leaves the stage announcing his intention to surprise Macduff's castle, followed by the scene in the castle between Lady Macduff and Rosse. "The two scenes, thus closely connected in thought, seem to be so in time also; distance has disappeared."[7] Guizot continues his commentary to the end of the play, emphasising how Shakespeare maintains the essential unity of idea and impression by the way he works upon the spectator's imagination.

Guizot next turns to a central critical crux: how and whether Shakespeare succeeds in achieving unity of action when his plays encompass so many events, so many places, so many years, all conditions of society. He argues that "the action, though vast, does not cease to be one, rapid and complete. This is because the poet has seized upon its fundamental condition, which consists in placing the centre of interest where he finds the centre of action. The character which gives movement to the drama, is also the one upon which the moral agitation of the spectator is bestowed." Guizot's examples in chief are Macbeth, Hamlet, Richard III and Romeo and Juliet, though, perhaps wisely, he restricts himself to the first three in detail; and also criticises Andromaque for its duplicity of action, or at least of interest. His illustration from Hamlet is of particular importance, since it both defends Shakespeare for his unclassical use of the comic, or grotesque, and praises him for his inclusion of different "conditions of society".

In Hamlet,"not only is the scene of the gravediggers connected with the general idea of the piece, by the kind of meditations which it inspires; but - and we know it - it is Ophelia's grave which they are digging in Hamlet's presence; and to Ophelia will relate, when he is

informed of this circumstance, all the impressions which have been kindled in his soul by the sight of those hideous and despised bones, and the indifference which is felt for the mortal remains of those who were once beautiful and powerful, honoured or beloved. No detail of these mournful preparations is lost to the feeling which they occasion; the coarse insensibility of the men devoted to the habits of such a trade, their songs and jokes, all have their effect; and the forms and means of comedy thus enter, without effort, into tragedy...."[8] He proceeds to praise the Porter scene in Macbeth, and the dramatic force obtained by the ghost in Hamlet appearing first to the night watch.

It is Shakespeare's greater completeness which Guizot is anxious to demonstrate as an example to the new age. "When we desire to produce man upon the stage in all the energy of his nature, it is not too much to summon to our aid man as a whole, and to exhibit him under all the forms and in all the positions of which his existence admits. Such a representation is not merely more complete and striking, but it is also more truthful and accurate."[9] The dramatists of France, following the Greek ideal, limited themselves to one corner of human existence. "Our poets have employed all the powers of genius to turn this narrow space to advantage; the abysses of the heart have been sounded to their utmost depth, but not in all their dimensions." The demands that Europe now makes of drama are "pleasures and emotions that can no longer be supplied by the inanimate representation of a world that has ceased to exist". A new dramaturgy is required, not Corneille's and Racine's, and not Shakespeare's; "but Shakespeare's system...may furnish the plans according to which genius ought now to work".[10] The drama is to be the drama of a liberal, post-revolutionary era which reflects the advances and events of the previous thirty years: "The nature and destiny of man have appeared to us under their most striking and their simplest aspect, in all their extent and all

their variableness. We require pictures in which this spectacle is reproduced, in which man is displayed in his completeness, and excites our entire sympathy."

This preface of Guizot, even in isolation a distinguished contribution to Shakespearean criticism, articulates the importance of the Shakespearean repertory for the French critics and writers, and at the same time explains why the acting style that had so recently developed in English tragedy was seen as an integral part of the exposition. The striking, the simple, the varied are all features of the new romantic style of Kean and Macready; and the Shakespearean system not only placed on stage an infinitely greater range of social classes than the French, but also placed them in a far wider range of situations. Guizot was enthusiastic about the opening scene of Julius Caesar, which begins with "a living picture of popular movements and feelings". It is the vitality, and, more surprisingly, contemporary relevance, of enacted Shakespeare which presented so startling a challenge. Amédée Pichot, whose detailed descriptions of the London stage present a full and objective survey of English drama,made a number of revealing comparisons - for instance: "In Paris, tragedy is a literary entertainment, and in London a dramatic treat"; more pertinently for Guizot's general line of argument, he commented that "On the English stage, kings are merely men; while, on ours, they are, sometimes, almost smothered by the weight of embroidered robes...."[11] Pichot, like Delacroix, Delécluze and Stendhal, was fully alive to the imperfections of the English theatre as a whole. Delacroix, describing his experience of the London theatre, observed that "Except for Shakespeare's plays, I have seen nothing in any of their theatres which was not a more or less clumsy imitation of what we have in France."[12] French comments on Shakespearean interpretation were habitually informed by an appreciation of the complete text, and the critics retained a very sharp sense of the distinction between the full

potential of a Shakespeare text, and the adulterated and foreshortened versions customarily presented in England. Nevertheless, the texts used by the English company in 1827 represented a marked advance on what was commonly available in France. The principal means of transmission in France had been the translations of La Place (1746) and Le Tourneur (1776-83, revised in 1821), and a number of stage versions or adaptations by Ducis. The translations of La Place were made in a mixture of verse and prose and were more in the nature of scenarios, with omissions and frequent summaries, usually of those sections of which the French might be expected to disapprove. The translation of Le Tourneur, in prose, was relatively faithful, and from time to time included notes on stage practice.

Ducis, who knew no English, was dependent on these translations for his stage adaptations. He made versions of Hamlet in 1769; Romeo and Juliet in 1772; King Lear in 1783; Macbeth in 1784; King John in 1791; and Othello in 1792. Ducis' handling of Hamlet may stand as representative of his radical method of classical simplification. Ophelia became Claudius' daughter, Polonius a confidant; Laertes, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Fortinbras, the strolling players (and as a consequence the play within the play) and the gravediggers were omitted. The ghost existed only in Hamlet's mind. In the condensed plot Gertrude died by her own hand, Claudius by Hamlet's, and at the close a melancholy, but not mad, Hamlet survived to rule in a future which might or might not include marriage to Ophelia. Gertrude remained unmarried to Claudius. The play is set entirely in the palace of Denmark, so maintaining unity of place. Ducis revised his first version at Talma's request in 1804, re-casting the fifth act and inserting the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. Diderot preferred Shakespeare's original English "monster" to Ducis's "scarecrow"; Stendhal, while dismissing Ducis's version, nevertheless thought Talma's interpreta-

tion of Hamlet sublime.[13]

Ducis's version, first performed on September 30th, 1769, was not withdrawn from the repertory of the Comédie-Française until 1851, by which time it had received 203 performances (65 of these, nearly a third, in the decade 1831-1840). One other version of Hamlet had been produced prior to 1827: a pantomime tragique in three acts by Henry at the Porte-Saint-Martin (February 28th, 1816). While the idea of Hamlet had been powerfully projected by Talma, and the character as a concept appealed to the Romanticists, the details and structure of Shakespeare's play were less generally familiar.

The story-lines, at least, of Romeo and Juliet and Othello were more widely disseminated, even though many versions contrived happy outcomes. In 1818 Franconi had produced a pantomime, Le More de Venise, at the Cirque Olympique (in which Lemaître had a small role); more significantly, there was Rossini's Otello, first played in Paris in 1825. Romeo and Juliet had given rise to a number of operatic versions: Tout pour l'Amour (by Monvel and Dalayrac) in 1792; Roméo et Juliette (Ségur and Steibelt) in 1793; and Vaccai's Giulietta e Romeo was given its Paris première on September 15th, 1827, with Crescentini and Mme Pasta, the same day as Kemble and Harriet Smithson first appeared in Shakespeare's, or rather Garrick's, version.

The announcement of the English season (and its later success) influenced the repertory of the Théâtre-Français. On June 16th, 1827, Ducis's Roméo et Juliette was given for the first time for over thirty years, and repeated on June 19th and July 1st, with Joanny as Montaigu, Pierre Victor as Roméo and Mlle Valmonzey as Juliette. It has been argued that the play's absence from the repertory may have been because of the lack of a suitable role for Talma: the only two male parts of consequence were Montaigu, a "père noble", and the young lover's role of Romeo, neither of which lay in Talma's line of parts.[14] The romanticist Globe

was unimpressed: "It is pointless to seize upon a romantic subject, which above everything demands freedom of time and place, and then to submit it to all the restrictions of classical form which grants neither requirement."[15]

The difficulties which Emile Laurent had to surmount before the English company could secure a suitable theatre need not be rehearsed, though the eventual outcome has some significance, in that the season opened in the Théâtre de l'Odéon: this theatre, although it had recently undergone financial difficulties, was the some-time home of the second Théâtre-Français, and so a theatre with a tradition of classical drama; it was also smaller in stage dimension and auditorium than Covent Garden or Drury Lane, which facilitated the relationship between actors and audience.

The general quality of the English Theatre's company was mediocre, though undoubtedly superior to that of Penley five years before. Following the English practice, the emphasis was to be placed on the starring role, and on various occasions the appearances of Young, Mathews, Farren and Madame Vestris (none of which materialised) were announced, as well as Charles Kemble, Maria Foote, William Terry, Liston, Macready and Kean (who did). The permanent company numbered some fourteen men and seven women, the nucleus from Covent Garden and the remainder mostly from Dublin or Bath. William Abbott was the company manager. He had acted for many years at Covent Garden, and had also had experience of management at the Theatre Royal, Dublin and at various provincial theatres. He was an excellent actor in supporting roles - as Horatio, or Cassio. Egerton was employed at Covent Garden for the "heavy business". The other actors were S. Bennett (Haymarket and Vauxhall), Brindal (Haymarket and Dublin), Burck (Drury Lane and Dublin), Burnet (Bath), Chippendale (Dublin), Dale (Bath), Grey (Covent Garden), Latham (Dublin), Mason and Power (Covent Garden), Reynolds (Dublin) and Spencer (Covent Garden). The actresses were Mrs

Bathurst (Covent Garden), Mrs Brindal (Haymarket and Dublin), Miss Gashall (Bath), Mrs Russell (Bath), Harriet Smithson (Drury Lane), Mrs Smithson (ascribed to Drury Lane, but rapidly dropped from the company), and Mrs Vaughan (Dublin).[16] Harriet Smithson was the female equivalent of Abbott in terms of reputation before the season began: she was not expected to undertake leading roles except in default.

The season opened on Thursday, September 6th. In the absence of both Charles Kemble and Maria Foote, it was decided to present John Liston in a comedy. It is worth noting that Liston did not appear in any of the parts for which he was best known in England, though the audience were deprived of Lubin Log in Kenney's Love, Law and Physic by the action of the censor;[17] and Tony Lumpkin, whom Liston played on September 8th, at least typifies the robust kind of role in which Liston excelled. The choice of The Rivals and She Stoops to Conquer indicates an attempt to impress the French by examples of English genteel comedy at its best. Harriet Countess Granville, the wife of the English ambassador, attended and reported that it made "a great sensation";[18] but the French, while generally polite in their criticisms, were neither impressed nor especially interested. They had little to learn from English comic writing or acting. The test came on September 11th with the announcement of Charles Kemble as Hamlet.

The performances of Hamlet, the productions of Romeo and Juliet and Othello which followed shortly, and, to a lesser extent, subsequent presentations of Jane Shore and Venice Preserv'd (with Harriet Smithson), Richard III (with Kean), and Virginius, Macbeth and Othello (with Macready) comprise an especially well-documented series of examples of English acting. The placings of the season within a wider cultural debate ensured not only alert audiences but extensive critical coverage. The lack of familiarity with English stage conventions and practice led to the recording of many details which would not be thought worthy of notice in

England. In addition to this availability of detailed comment, the acting texts were published in a special edition; and a series of lithographs was produced in November, 1827, "Souvenirs du théâtre anglais" (Fig.24), by Achille Devéria and Louis Boulanger,[19] which, it can be established, reflected with a substantial degree of accuracy the details of stage presentation.

The text which the English theatre used was, substantially, that current at the Theatres Royal. This acting text was published in French, in English, and in a combined edition.[20] The plays featured were Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello, Macbeth, King Lear, and, outside Shakespeare, Jane Shore and Venice Preserv'd. Comparisons of Hamlet with Oxberry's edition of the play, representing contemporary practice at the Theatres Royal, or Kemble's Covent Garden promptbook, show few and relatively minor changes. Some were in response to the demands of the French censor: the figure of the Priest was cut out, together with any reference to the burial of suicides. Others, such as the omission of the second gravedigger, may have been caused by the small size of the company.

Allowing for modifications as indicated above, and for the fact that the English company were dependent upon stock scenery, it is reasonable to assume that the staging arrangements would follow Covent Garden practice wherever possible. Charles Kemble, around whom the season was initially built, inherited copies of his brother's promptbooks; and William Abbott, the stage-manager, had been a member of the Covent Garden company for many years. An example of the details of stage arrangement may be useful at this point. The mouse-trap scene from Hamlet is an appropriate choice, since it was selected as a subject for illustration, and was also commented upon at length by numerous critics. The Kemble promptbook of Hamlet contains a stage-plan for the Mouse-trap scene (Fig.25). The principal features are the placing of the Players' performance to the rear of the stage; the seating of Claudius and Gertrude stage left, with Polonius in

attendance; and of Ophelia, joined in due course by Hamlet, stage right, accompanied by Horatio. The stage within a stage consisted of a raised platform behind a small proscenium arch, which was furnished with a working drop-curtain. (On p.44 of the promptbook is the direction: "Bell rings, and the Curtain rises for the play.")[21]

In his journal entry on 16.9.27, Delécluze gives a detailed account of the performance of September 13th, 1827 (when Hamlet was given a second time), and writes: "Voilà à peu près comment les principaux personnages étaient disposés sur le théâtre et la place qu'occup t le second théâtre où les comédiens d'Hamlet jouaient".[22] This disposition (Fig 26) sketched by Delécluze agrees in every major particular with the promptbook sketch, though of necessity the English theatre employed very few supernumeraries, and certainly nothing of the order of the "4 Gents 4 Ladies" on either flank. The enforced spareness in dressing the stage helped to focus attention more sharply on the principal actors and actions. It is significant that these performances owed nothing to spectacular use of supernumeraries, to music or to specially designed scenery. The Delécluze sketch serves to authenticate the Devéria/Boulanger lithograph, and hence its companion lithographs, as accurate reflections of stage arrangement.

In the Delécluze, "Le Roi" and "La Reine" are seated stage left; centre rear stage is "le petit théâtre"; centre right is Hamlet, seated indecorously on the floor propped on one elbow, and holding up Ophelia's fan through which he can scrutinize the King's reactions; and seated right, on a rather more spacious seat than the stool indicated in the Kemble promptbook, is the tense figure of Ophelia.

(Fig. 27)

The Devéria reduces the size of the "petit théâtre", and shifts it downstage, perhaps to enable the artists to accommodate so many figures within the lithograph's dimensions. It would be over-interpreting the Delécluze to do much more than note the correspondance of the chief actors'

positions; yet even in the rough lines of his sketch there is an observable similarity in posture between his Hamlet and Ophelia and the figures in Devéria's tableau.

(Fig. 28)

When one examines the comparable Delacroix lithograph of 1835, there is a striking difference both in quality and intention. While the placing of the murder of Gonzago at the back of the stage is retained, and several details reflect contemporary English stage practice (notably the locket/picture around Hamlet's neck, and his appropriation of Ophelia's fan), the placing of the central figures derives from Delacroix's concentration on composition and line, and his wish to interpret the dynamics of the imagined moment, rather than from any purpose of recording an image from a stage performance.

Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais, with an accompanying text by F.J. Moreau, was published in November, 1827. As might be expected, the choice of subjects tends to coincide with the scenes, characters and motifs which dominated the French commentaries. The illustrations of Hamlet are, apart from the Murder of Gonzago (Act 3 scene 2), Ophelia's madness (Act 4), and Hamlet and Horatio with the Clown/Gravedigger, "Alas! poor Yorick!" The scene of the play within the play, and the scenes of Ophelia's madness, attracted close critical attention. None of these scenes had a counterpart in the version of Ducis. All explored situations of extreme tension, pathos, irony, yet none resulted in the violent action which was so alien to French dramaturgy. In each Shakespeare employs a variety of modes of speech, and what Delécluze referred to as "ce mélange de bouffoneries et de choses terribles", a juxtaposition of the grotesque and the serious.

"Lying just as he is shown there, he" (Kemble) "held Ophelia's fan, by means of which he contrived, during the players' speeches, to follow the effect that their words were producing on the expressions of the king and queen. He swivelled first towards the players to urge them on, then to-

wards the king to uncover his secret and then to Ophelia to draw her attention to everything that was happening. The French spectators were most receptive to all these movements by Kemble, who played this passage with much intelligence and with a certain wholly English grace such as we have no conception of."[23]

Delécluze stresses the physical energy of Kemble's acting. The posture itself would excite comment on the French stage; a prince in a French tragedy would not lie on the ground. Indeed, when J.P. Kemble played Hamlet in London in 1783, he was criticised for "lolling, not only to say resting not only his arm, but in great measure his person on Ophelia's lap";[24] and Kean, admittedly an infinitely stronger actor then Charles Kemble, was in his extreme boldness bordering "on the verge of all we hate" in acting the same role. The rapidity with which new postures, ideas and effects followed each other was equally unusual. (An instructive contrast might be Agrippina's speech to Nero in Britannicus.) The business with the fan, the kind of concrete detail which English Romantic tragic acting emphasised (though a traditional piece of stage business) lent naturalistic conviction. It is also significant that Delécluze has so far omitted any reference to Kemble's declamation.

"But the interest grew. At the very moment when, on the stage within the stage, the poison was poured into the ear of the sleeping king, and when King Claudius and his wife seemed struck by the resemblance between this crime and the one they committed, Hamlet dragged himself right over to them and somehow rivetting them to their seats cried out in a sparkling torrent of words such as only the English language can produce: 'Il l'empoisonne pour avoir son royaume! Son nom est Gonzague! L'histoire est véritable....Ah! Ah!'"[26]

The torrent of words quoted by Delécluze is in prose: the scene might have been expressly designed to exemplify Stendhal's thesis of the new

dramaturgy. But it was the cry of "Ah! Ah!" which Kemble uttered in the tone of a man triumphing in a difficult task, that so electrified the audience and led Charles Nodier, Delécluze's neighbour, to comment of it "là voilà enfin la tragédie".

Charles Magnin, in a series of letters to Le Globe (later published as Causeries et méditations historiques) selects initially the same scene as Delécluze for analysis: "In the scene where Hamlet, simulating madness, sits on the ground to hear the comedy...his posture so lacking in the tragic bearing...occasioned only a mild surprise, almost immediately repressed. Everyone seemed to sense that some major dramatic effect would arise from such a violation of decorum....They were not mistaken." Magnin proceeds to enumerate the various movements of Kemble: he "slid towards his mother" ... "crept towards her" ... "rose up on his knees" ... "bounded upright" - these were the steps by which the performance attained the sublime.[27]

The second scene that Magnin cites is from Act Four, where "the sight of Ophelia driven mad by a fatal sympathy, running into the queen's presence, in mourning clothes and with her head strangely adorned with flowers and long stalks of grass, and above all the first snatch of her unusual song, provoked a slight gasp of surprise." But in the space of a second Harriet Smithson's "touching pantomime" moved every spectator to the depths of their soul, "including those who did not wholly understand the words". Once again, it was the physical movements, and the interpretative "business", as well as the non-verbal expressions of emotion, which so struck the audience: "her features so distraught and yet still so young and attractive, her plaintive song, her sobs so true, the endless stream of words, the long black veil which she lets fall and the instant after mistakes for the shroud which covers her father's coffin, the flowers which she scatters there as on a tomb, the stifled prayer she

murmurs...." Some of these elements are inherent within the scene; some (the veil mistaken for a shroud) were traditional stage-business. Together they provided a concentration of dramatic means of expression which, as with the previous Mouse-trap scene, exemplified a dramaturgy strikingly different in style to the French tradition. Dumas called the latter scene "la scène de l'éventail", the scene of the fan; Delécluze describes Ophelia's mad scene as the one where "she mistakes her veil for her father's corpse". Yet the acting remained controlled: Delécluze, swift to comment on excesses, ascribed to Miss Smithson "as much grace as truth". The impact that she made in this scene is particularly remarkable in view of the practice of allotting the role of Ophelia in England to a singer. (In 1821, the Theatrical Observer commented that Miss Tree "did not give the songs with the requisite simplicity of style. Ornament in the singing of a maniac is entirely out of character."[28]) It is likely that Miss Smithson was entrusted with Ophelia, not a part she usually played, because it was thought not to matter. Whether or not she interpreted the part in a manner radically different to English custom, it certainly appeared arresting to the French, so that Magnin could describe the scene as "at once poetic and real, distressing and graceful, naive and sublime",[29] while Delécluze recorded: "she adopts fantastic postures; and she uses the 'dying fall' in her inflexions, without ever ceasing to be natural, to great effect."[30] Certainly the Devéria lithograph (Fig.29) suggests an extravagance of posture that was alien to the French classical stage; at the same time it gives a sense of grace and movement, as does the earlier moment illustrated by Delacroix (Fig.30). The performance that Ophelia is unconsciously giving before Claudius, Gertrude and Laertes, in terms of song and ritual, provided a restraining perspective for the French spectators which was lacking in the extremities of, for instance, the fifth act, which, Delécluze claimed, "appeared absurd to everybody".[31] It was the complex

nature of the drama which appealed to the post-Revolution French, and the abrupt transitions of emotion, as described by Moreau: "Passing suddenly from the most wrenching grief to a kind of convulsive joy, like the sardonic laughter of a dying man, she (Ophelia) offers flowers to those around her, whom she no longer recognizes, and sings, without being aware that she is singing, words whose frivolity forms the most melancholy and theatrical contrast with her actual condition..."[32]

In assessing the qualitative differences between French and English acting, both Delécluze and Magnin ascribe the greatest importance to the repertory. Delécluze: "To sum up, since English dramatic works introduce more differences of tone, style and gesture of the characters on stage, there is necessarily greater variety in the presentation of English plays than in those of our theatre. As for a sense of the natural itself, it is to all intents shown in the same proportions on each stage. The manner is different, but each appears to me equally mannered."[33] Magnin similarly ascribes the wider range of the English actor to necessity; to rise to a role such as Hamlet, one must be an accomplished actor in both tragedy and comedy. "The English tragedian has not solely, like ours, to sound one or two solemn strings; he must traverse with ease and power the whole range of the human heart."[34] Behind Magnin's comment, especially, one senses the demand articulated by, among others, Guizot and Stendhal, for a modern, Romantic French dramaturgy founded upon, but not slavishly imitating, the Shakespearean system. For an aspiring dramatist such as Dumas, the performance of Hamlet represented the transformation of the artificial into the natural: "It was men of the theatre forgetting that they were on stage; it was that fabricated life which was transformed into actual life by the power of art; it was that reality of word and gesture which turned actors into living creations of flesh and blood complete with every virtue, passion and weakness, rather than into stilted, impassive, bombastic and

sententious heroes."[35] Moreau, describing the English actors' pantomime as "more animated, more expressive" than the French, claimed that they had made familiar the "faithful representation of simple nature",[36] and so encouraged both French poets and actors to leave the beaten paths of routine and take flight.

After two performances of Hamlet, the English Theatre announced Romeo and Juliet; presumably, the enthusiastic notices persuaded Kemble that Harriet Smithson was capable of sustaining Juliet, and that it was unnecessary to await the arrival of Maria Foote. (In fact, most French critics expressed a preference for Smithson's interpretation, when they later had a chance to compare the two.) If the figure of Hamlet represented one Romantic Northern archetype, the story of Romeo and Juliet, though set in southern Europe, expressed many of the Romantics' preoccupations: the conflict of youth against age, the private against the public, the individual against fate, the validity of passion against social conformity. The play was given in a version that was predominantly Garrick's, though several features were omitted, notably the funeral procession and musical accompaniment that followed Juliet's supposed death. (There is evidence that the English Theatre did not have the usual orchestral support.) It is not necessary to rehearse the full range of approval which generally greeted the performance, but it is useful to concentrate on a few of the staging and acting elements which prompted specific comment.

First, Delécluze used the balcony scene to commend the relaxed and natural movement-pattern of English actors on stage. The lovers "were towards the rear of the stage, entirely occupied with their role and paying no attention to the public. Kemble never turned his head once towards the footlights and although Juliet has frequent asides, she never looked at the spectators."[37] He gives one practical explanation for this: the absence of

a prompter in the centre of the forestage, which in France "draws all the actors mechanically" towards the prompter's box. The English "are obliged to know their parts totally, which gives them complete freedom to adopt a position which best suits the scene". In soliloquy, French actors had the bad habit of talking directly to the spectators, so removing all sense of illusion. The Courrier Français had made an observation similar to that of Delécluze, saying that it was "absolutely essential - and this is Mlle Mars' opinion too - that our actors borrow from the English the proper and reasonable manner of behaving on the stage as though they are in a drawing-room. In our tradition, when five or six characters are on stage, they gather in a semi-circle by the footlights....In England the actors come and go on the stage. When there is no need for them to take part in the dialogue, they retire to the rear, in other words they behave as people in the salons of Paris and London behave."[38]

This more natural movement-pattern was, unsurprisingly, also apparent in comedy. Jergerhuis, noting his reactions to Cherry's The Soldier's Daughter in Amsterdam, wrote: "Their positioning was most remarkable, (Fig. 32) spread out over the whole stage, and in between one another, in this way indicating natural confusion, an ordered confusion, however, although at the same time free of that visible order which is a feature of the French and Dutch theatre, in which most of the actors gather round the prompter, and where they always, with a certain decorum, pass behind each other. Such positioning made asides possible and probable."

A comment by Delécluze, echoed by Magnin, on a fault in the staging is equally revealing about the criteria contemporary critics were developing. The scene of Romeo's farewell to Juliet ("Wilt thou be gone?") took place, not on the balcony or in Juliet's bedchamber, but in the garden, almost certainly because of exigencies of scenery and scene-changing at the Odéon. "I would have wished for the balcony again, and a ladder, in fact all the

apparatus of a risky night rendezvous." The physical setting is recognized as an integral feature of the scene; besides, the playing of the scene on the level stage detracts from the parting, and contradicts the sense of the words: "Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low..."[40] These criticisms reveal both the common emphasis on realism, and the growing desire to see the full range of dramatic means employed.

In one respect, the French found the English actors too realistic. "The English actors represent with the most minute particularity every nuance of agony and every detail of a slow and painful death."[41] This was equally true of Abbott, dying by the sword as Mercutio, as of Kemble, giving a pathologically accurate account of each stage of his death by poison. This specialism of Kemble (and other English actors) attracted caustic comment even in England. "Romeo testifies as clamorous an indisposition to quit the world, and, in mellow sounds, as loud a distaste for the means, as that animal so tenaciously attached to the joys of life, the luxurious pig. Mr Kemble makes us feel that he has been dealing with an apothecary, by most unequivocal diagnostics."[42] Even allowing for the shock of seeing such scenes on stage, one can detect from the French commentators a sense of Kemble over-acting. Delécluze observed judiciously that his approach tended to make one forget the dramatic situation and place all attention and interest on a purely physical pain - "which, in the arts, is a fault."[43]

This reservation was not shared by the more enthusiastic Romantics. Magnin gives a précis of the effects of the tomb-scene (in Garrick's adaptation) in the following list of striking elements:

"Romeo's joy, his complete oblivion of his own fate, the energy he finds again to lift her from her coffin, his last and burning kisses; the numbness of the young girl, her distress, her naive terror, her cry of joy in recognizing Romeo; the agony of the poison which begins to overcome him

and tear at his entrails and chill his embraces; his pallor, his shudders, his convulsive dizziness, his fall, his groans, his delirium...." The catalogue continues to record each stage of Juliet's last moments, which Magnin summarises as "this whole sequence of such true and tragic images".[44]

What Magnin, and many of his contemporaries, was clearly responding to was a sequence of extremely emotive dramatic images, in which the words were subservient to the setting, the action, the physical and vocal expressiveness of the actor and actress. The shock, pleasant or unpleasant according to the predilections of the audience, derived from four secondary sources: the detailed realism of the English style of acting; the unprecedented subject matter which was enacted; the authentification of the emotions thus aroused by the Shakespearean context; the sense, already discussed, that the example of method provided by the English Theatre was capable of development. The performance certainly fulfilled the Romantic ideal of exciting the emotions, especially fear; but it equally excited the creative imaginations of those who witnessed it. Moreau specifically demanded a reform in dramatic art comparable to that achieved by David in painting and Rossini in music.

Of the twelve lithographs by Devéria and Boulanger, no less than five (Figs 33-36) are devoted to Romeo and Juliet (as opposed to three for Hamlet, two for Othello, and two for Jane Shore). The subjects are Juliet in her Nurse's lap; Romeo beneath Juliet's balcony; Romeo in despair at Friar Lawrence's cell; Romeo's parting from Juliet; and the death of Romeo and Juliet in the tomb. These five moments provide a schematic account of the central action. The scene of Juliet and the Nurse is balanced by that of Romeo with the Friar, and in each the posture of the lover prefigures the final scene in the tomb; and the first balcony scene balances the farewell, Juliet's open gesture in the former leading the eye towards her bedroom, whereas in the

latter she clings to Romeo as he points to the dawn, but also away from the house to exile. Here again the Nurse, in a different way, serves as a reminder of death; and Romeo's sombre doublet contrasts with the lighter shade of his previous visit. In the tomb scene, the image holds in tension the terrible and the sensuous; the awkwardness of Romeo's posture, his mourning clothes, the discarded sword and hat suggest the struggle against death, while Juliet's long white form, unbraided hair and outstretched arm signify the abandonment of passion. Not only the correspondance between the Delécluze sketch and the Devéria/Boulanger lithograph of the Mouse-trap scene in Hamlet, but also comments such as Moreau's on the Juliet/Nurse lithograph: "la pose consacrée à la scène anglaise par une heureuse tradition" indicate that these images reflected intentionally the stage-images of the Odéon production.

Another image of Romeo and Juliet is provided by Francis' lithograph (Fig 37) of 1827, in which Kemble looks most of his 52 years, and Miss Smithson looks surprised. Yet the picture confirms the sense of reality, of raw truth, which was the quality so often cited; there is nothing over-graceful about the posture, and the physical contact, the expressions on each face, and the bridal/mourning contrast in dress all contribute to the uncompromising "vérité" of the image. It is useful to recall some of Magnin's phrases: "the energy he finds again to lift her from her coffin...the numbness of the young girl, her distress, her cry of terror...." What the Francis study expresses above everything is the specificity of the dramatic situation and the characters; there is a particularity, an intimacy, about the image, which is far removed from the more generalised and necessarily verbal dramatic statements of French tragedy. The essential difference is that expressed by Stendhal as early as 1811 in his notes on Corneille: an analysis of Cinna. "In general, in what we have seen of the play, we do not acquire an intimate knowledge of the characters. Basing our judgment

merely on what they say, we are able to form three or four totally distinct impressions of their character. After ten lines, we know one of Shakespeare's characters through and through."[45] What Shakespeare's writing, and English Romantic acting, could provide in conjunction was a new, or at least re-discovered, approach to dramatic character. Emile Deschamps defined the essence of the question as lying in "the individualised painting of the characters, in the continual replacement of recitation by action, in the simplicity of the language or the poetic colour, in a style, in short, totally modern."[46] As a forum for the experiment, he called for a new theatre "with young actors, ready to play every kind of role, while studying the expressive pantomime and natural style of declamation of the great English actors, the only ones who, since Talma, have made us experience the tragic emotions."[47]

CHAPTER 4 : NOTES

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2. Le Journal de la Belgique, November 6th, 1814.
3. See Joseph-Léopold Borgerhoff, Le Théâtre Anglais à Paris. Paris, 1913. Chapter 1; and Victor Leathers, British Entertainers in France. Toronto, 1959. Chapter 7.
4. Oeuvres Complètes de Shakespeare, traduite de l'anglais par Letourneur, Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée par F. Guizot et A.P. traducteur de Lord Byron, précédée d'une notice biographique et littéraire sur Shakespeare, par F. Guizot. 13 vols. Paris, 1821.
5. François Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, London, 1852, p.156.
6. Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, pp.162-3.
7. Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, p.166.
8. Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, pp.172-3.
9. Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, p.175.
10. Guizot, Shakespeare and his Times, p.181.
11. Amédée Pichot, Historical and Literary Tour of a Foreigner in England and Scotland. 2 vols. London, 1825. vol.1, pp.262-3.
12. Delacroix, letter to Pierret, August 1st, 1825, in Correspondance Générale, vol.1, p.168. Stendhal, who paid his second visit to London in 1821, October 27th-November 23rd, complained in a letter to the Examiner (November 26th, 1821): "I flew to Drury Lane and found a melodrama worthy of the Porte-Saint-Martin." This was Richard III. "Upon the correction of a number of verses in Richard III and the justifiable suppression of certain scenes, I have nothing to say, so long as the adapter uses his scissors alone; but when a modern

pretender resolves to give us his own paltry sentiments instead of the great thoughts of Shakespeare I detect the last stage of the ridiculous."

13. See Helen P. Bailey, Hamlet in France, from Voltaire to Laforgue. Geneva, 1964. Chapter 2 is of particular relevance - "The Legend of the 'Monstrous Farce' Persists. 1800-1836."
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15. Le Globe, June 21st, 1827.
16. N.P. Chaulin, Biographie dramatique des principaux artistes anglais venus à Paris, précédée de Souvenirs historiques du théâtre anglais à Paris en 1827 et 1828. Paris, 1828.
17. See Chaulin, Biographie dramatique, and Journal des Débats, September 10th, 1827.
18. Countess Granville, letter to Lady Carlisle, September 6th, 1827, in Letters of Harriet, Countess Granville, 1810-1845, ed. Hon. F. Leveson Gower. 2 vols. London, 1894. Vol.1, p.427.
19. F. Moreau, Souvenirs du théâtre anglais à Paris. Paris, 1827.
20. Théâtre Anglais, ou collection des pièces anglaises jouées à Paris. Paris, 1827-8. The collection included Hamlet, Roméo et Juliette, Othello, Jane Shore, Venise Sauvée, and Le Roi Léar.
21. Charles H. Shattuck, ed., John Philip Kemble Promptbooks. 11 vols. Charlottesville, 1974. Vol.2.
22. Delécluze, Journal, p.455.
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24. See Arthur C. Sprague, "The Stage Business in Shakespeare's Plays: A Postscript". Society for Theatre Research, No.3, 1953, p.17.
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26. Delécluze, Journal, pp.455-6.

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28. Theatrical Observer, January 4th, 1822.
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30. Delécluze, Journal, p.458.
31. Delécluze, Journal, p.458.
32. Moreau, Souvenirs du théâtre anglais.
33. Delécluze, Journal, p.460.
34. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.70.
35. Alexandre Dumas, Théâtre Complet, ed. Fernande Bassau. Paris, 1974. "Comment Je Devins Auteur Dramatique", vol.1, p.48.
36. Moreau, Souvenirs du théâtre anglais.
37. Delécluze, Journal, p.462.
38. Le Courrier Français, September 13th, 1827.
39. See Ben Albach, "A Dutch Actor's Experiences with English Theatre in Amsterdam, May-July 1814" in Western Popular Theatre, ed. D. Mayer and K. Richards. London, 1977. p.77.
40. Delécluze, Journal, p.463.
41. Delécluze, Journal, p.465.
42. Spectator, May 23rd, 1829, p.330.
43. Delécluze, Journal, p.465.
44. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, pp.74-5.
45. Geoffrey Strickland (ed.), Selected Journalism from the English Reviews by Stendhal with translations of other Critical Writings. London, 1959. p.291.
46. Emile Deschamps, Préface des Etudes Françaises et Etrangères, ed. Henri Girard. Paris, 1923. p.52.
47. Deschamps, Préface des Etudes Françaises et Etrangères, p.53.

Chapter 5

DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH DRAMA: THE ROMANTIC IMPULSE

The English season, originally planned to end in December, 1827 was prolonged, with a number of intermissions, until July 25th, 1828; even then, Smithson and Abbott lingered, touring the provinces, returning to Paris for occasional performances - Charles Kemble made a second brief visit in September, 1828 - and appearing from time to time in benefits for their French colleagues. The Shakespearean repertory consisted of Hamlet (eight times), Romeo and Juliet (four), Othello (six), King Lear (three), The Merchant of Venice (six), Richard III (three) and Macbeth (three);[1] the French were able to make a number of comparisons: between Smithson and Foote as Juliet; between Kemble and Macready as Hamlet; between Kemble, Kean and Macready as Othello. In terms of Shakespearean acting, it was Macready as Macbeth, and as Othello in his final performance, who was judged to offer the most significant model apart from the startling impact of the initial performances of Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet.

The English non-Shakespearean repertory was, because of the intermittent absence of a major actor and through the need to provide novelty, well represented. The most frequently performed play of all was, in fact, Rowe's Jane Shore, primarily a vehicle for Harriet Smithson, which was given thirteen times, including one performance at the Théâtre Français for the benefit of the actor Baptiste. Other plays worth noting were Otway's Venice Preserved (three times), Knowles' Virginius (five) and William Tell (four), and Payne's Junius Brutus (twice). Knowles' tragedies were of particular interest to the French in that they were regarded as attempts to create a new Romantic drama based upon a Shakespearean structure; while Junius Brutus invited comparisons with such works as David's canvas The Lictors bringing back to Brutus the bodies of his sons. All these plays

were presented in English, and for the most part therefore posed even more problems of understanding for their predominantly French audiences than did the Shakespearean repertory.

The subject matter of Jane Shore, however, was relatively familiar to the French, in part through the medium of Richard III. It had been translated in volume 1 of Chefs d'oeuvre du théâtre anglais (1822); Talma had appeared as Gloucester in Lemercier's adaptation (April 1st, 1824) and a rival version by Liadière was played at the Odéon the following day. In addition, the figure of Jane Shore as an example of suffering innocence was one of those literary subjects increasingly favoured by artists. Blake had used it twice. Delacroix's journal entry of 6.3.1824: "Pensé à faire des compositions sur Jane Shore et le théâtre d'Otway" had crystallised to "Commencé à peindre la Pénitence de Jane Shore" on April 15th.[2] His lithograph, depicting the moment when Jane's husband vainly tries to help her, quotes Rowe's text.[3] The moment is the same as Devéria and Boulanger illustrated, which again emphasises the pathos of Jane Shore's predicament, while the good Belmour stands despairingly and helplessly by. Besides this lithograph, Souvenirs du théâtre anglais also contains a sketch of Jane Shore lying dead, with Moreau's accompanying comment "L'illusion théâtrale ne saurait aller plus loin".

Magnin's comments on Smithson's acting in the fifth act of Jane Shore are pertinent in that they once again stress the elements which appealed to the Romantic imagination while expressing reservations about the dramatic vehicle. "From what would have furnished only one or two acts in Shakespeare, he (Rowe) has made five, by means of long-drawn-out speeches. His manner is a kind of mean and compromise between English and French tragedy."[4] The action only lasts a few days, but the setting changes frequently, even within an act, with fussy switches between the palace and Jane Shore's house; the characters have historical names, but that is all:

Rowe has sacrificed everything to the character of Jane Shore, following the example of second-rate French dramatic authors. There is, Magnin implies, a lack of incident, an absence of varied and arresting scenes, a dearth of verifying detail: even Lemercier, struck with the beauty of the dénouement, found the rest of the scenario too empty and was forced to add new incidents, and especially "to draw on the historical truth of Shakespeare". (Fig. 41)

The role of Jane Shore, however, gave Harriet Smithson the chance to extend her range of suffering females, not as a young, innocent girl like Ophelia, Juliet, Desdemona, but this time as a "melancholy beauty made wan with tears." (This was the kind of rôle Marie Dorval would perfect.) Miss Smithson "reached the highest degree of the pathétique. When dying from hunger and fatigue, but alone, and at last free of the crowd who have tired of pursuing her, she dares to raise her eyes and recognizes the house of her friend Alicia...a wave of grief surges through her limbs. She knocks on the door with the gestures of hope and necessity. But the servants push her away. Then she collapses with grief and exhaustion...."[5] As with the description of the death scene in Romeo and Juliet, it is the pantomime which struck the spectators so forcibly (and Magnin's record is supported by numerous testimonies to Smithson's capacity to reduce the audience to tears in this scene). The dramatic context has relegated the words to a subsidiary function, and the actress achieves her effect by a sequence of strong positions and gestures, which are dynamic rather than static, and which also acquire additional force by the intervention of other characters (the servants, Alicia, and, later in the scene, Shore and Belmour). The sequence would be perfectly clear in meaning without any words at all, and similar situations could be cited ad nauseam from melodrama, where dialogue was kept to a minimum and its place supplemented by musical underpinning. What was unusual for the French spectators was to

see this style of acting within a distinctly neo-classical drama. Increasingly the Romantic critics began to analyse the English theatre not for its characteristic strengths and beauties but for isolated elements and examples which could serve as models for the new Romantic drama which was in the process of development, a drama which required a new dramaturgy of structure, language, declamation, mime, décor and mise en scène.

Other images which were commented upon in the ensuing months by Magnin and others included Harriet Smithson as Belvidera in Venice Preserv'd - when, on her knees, she begins to scrabble at the earth to recover the corpse of her lover, "one of the most harrowing pictures that poet or painter has ever drawn";[6] Cordelia in Lear's arms, when "it was impossible to be at once so dead and so beautiful";[7] and Kean's "jeu muet" as Brutus in his scenes of madness: Payne's Brutus was, however, judged to be an inferior piece, history which had truth "only for the eyes".[8] Magnin and his fellow critics were searching for something more than this, and to some extent found it in Virginius. For one thing, Knowles had, by his construction of the drama, allowed the audience to acquire a comparatively detailed knowledge of Virginius, and to a lesser extent Virginia, by a judicious mingling of private, domestic scenes with public ones, in contrast to the treatments of Campistron, la Harpe and Alfieri: "Neither made us see Virginius in the simplicity of his domestic life, displaying, before his misfortune, that character at once so firm and so tender which renders both inevitable and painful that resolution which brings on the catastrophe." This was the formula which Macready thrived on, the simple, reticent, family man bursting forth into the noblest and grandest of emotions. "Macready was simple, passionate, terrifying. One must evoke the memory of Talma to express the sense of such variety and power of technique, such a synthesis of human accents and idealised grief."[9]

The comparison with Talma is a further indication that the French were

less interested in praising the English than in identifying the correct style of acting for the modern stage. Macready recalled Charles Kemble in the energy of his pantomime, and this element of pantomime, with certain reservations about death scenes, was almost universally accepted as an improvement on French practice. Macready's diction, on the other hand, was of a superior school to that of Kemble. Magnin had already remarked[10] on the essentially artificial declamation of Maria Foote, different to that of Mlle Bourgoin or Duchesnois, but still, like that of all the English actors, artificial when compared to Talma. But Macready was "completely natural, simple, free from any sign of chanting";[11] and the deep tones of his voice were resonant and clear, like those of Talma. The only point of surprise was a certain rigidity of bearing, which Magnin ascribed to English theatrical etiquette, and which might more generally be recognized as a national characteristic. It was, then, Macready, a counterpart to Talma, who was recognized as a model for actors just as Harriet Smithson in her more limited range of roles was taken as a model of the pathétique for French actresses. Charles Kemble revealed the general characteristics of the English acting tradition; Kean, who some years before might have made as sharp an impact as Macready, was widely recognized to be long past his best. Delécluze described him as "small, thick-set, poorly built and ugly of feature, he adds to these disadvantages a raucous, guttural voice which reminded me at times of the horrible cries that English coachmen make to galvanise their horses".[12] Only in pantomime did he still excel, and although his five to six minute sword-fight with Richmond excited admiration, it was not felt to have much to do with Shakespeare.

While the English season continued to present examples, the course of French Romantic drama was in the process of evolution.[13] Hugo published his Préface de Cromwell in December 1827, the first systematic analysis of what the new drama should offer written by a dramatist, or at least at this

stage of his career an imaginative writer and potential dramatist, as opposed to a critic. Vigny and Emile Deschamps began work on a translation of Romeo and Juliet, which was accepted by the Comité of the Théâtre-Français on April 15th, 1828. Various explanations were advanced for the production's postponement; Vigny later explained that Mlle Mars thought the role of Juliet "un peu trop enfantine" for her (she was in her fiftieth year). Soulié's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet was then produced at the Odéon, so stealing a march on the Vigny/Deschamps project. This version, weakly written and constructed according to the classical plan, offered little in terms of development, though Lockroy was considered to have given a passable account of the English style of pantomime in the fifth act. The next event of importance was the production of Dumas's Henri III at the Théâtre-Français on February 10th, 1829, after the same author's Christine, in fact accepted earlier, had been postponed in circumstances as obscure as those responsible for suppressing the Vigny/Deschamps Romeo.

Although the production of Hugo's Hernani is usually taken to be the significant moment for the new Romantic drama, the process of change had, as is usually the case, begun some while before. Most notably, this had been true of the innovations encouraged by Taylor in the area of décor and costume. Taylor's background in scenic innovation has already been outlined in Chapter 2. When Taylor assumed the post of "Commissaire Royal" at the Théâtre-Français (July 9th, 1825), he commissioned Ciceri to design the scenery for Pichat's Léonidas, and assigned a budget of fifteen thousand francs to its execution. Alongside such attention to scenery and costumes, unprecedented at the Théâtre-Français, went similar care as to the mise en scène, especially in the disposition and animation of super-numeraries who "demonstrated, by the expressiveness and truth of their pantomime, how much a man of talent can extract for the total effect from a crowd of men one had not thought until now capable of more than peeling to

left or right in front of Néron or Sémiramis".[14]

Ironically, the play written by Hugo in the name of "la Nature et la Vérité", Cromwell, with some sixty characters, countless extras, and scenes such as Cromwell bursting into Westminster hall on horseback, made too many demands for even Taylor to contemplate staging it. It was the less theoretical, more instinctive, dramatist Dumas who had the honour of writing the first thoroughly Romantic drama for the Théâtre-Français.

Dumas claimed to have been first attracted towards drama by a production of Ducis's Hamlet in 1819 or 1820; he, later, was impressed by Talma in Sylla. He had collaborated on a number of unperformed vaudevilles, before eventually having two accepted; worked on a melodrama based on Ivanhoe, which was rejected; attempted a tragedy with Soulié, Les Gracques; and a "drame historique" on his own based on Schiller, Fiesque de Lavagna. These, and the version of Christine already submitted, comprise relatively limited preparation for the innovatory Henri III which had all the appearance of a play composed to demonstrate Romantic theory: a historical ambiance, requiring contrasted and accurate settings; authentic costumes; numerous props; a large cast; the juxtaposition of public and private scenes; sensational and violent episodes; and dialogue written in prose. Although a campaign of opposition was launched during the rehearsal period, and a petition even sent to the King after the first performance, Dumas's lack of reputation saved the play from an organized claque during its first night. It was only subsequently that the actors had to contend with concerted interruptions, as Joanny recorded in his Journal: "the last words of the play...are rarely heard. It appears the action is too extreme...the exquisites!"[15]

Dumas acknowledged his debt to the English theatre in his vivid if not wholly reliable memoirs. "Macready, Kean, Young, in turn completed the work begun by Kemble and Miss Smithson. I had seen Hamlet, Romeo, Shylock,

Othello, Richard III and Macbeth. I read and devoured not only all Shakespeare's works but also the works of foreign dramatists....One after the other I took the works of men of genius, laid them out as bodies on a dissecting table, and, scalpel in hand, spent whole nights in probing them to the heart, endeavouring to trace their sources of life and the secret of the circulation of their blood."[16] This close analysis certainly bore fruit in one respect of Henri III. Dumas's own estimate seems manifestly just: "Let any conscientious critic submit it to the most rigorous examination and he will find many flaws in the style, but none in the plot. I have written fifty plays since Henri III, but none is better constructed."[17] Yet in terms of dramatic effect, it is equally the stage-business and vivid dramatic context that is so striking; and there are a number of close parallels between Henri III and the plays presented during the English season.

The elements and motifs include: the Duchesse de Guise's identifiable handkerchief, the locked chamber, the brutal behaviour of husband to wife (Othello); the rope-ladder, the sleeping-draught and poison, and the waking of a drugged woman in her lover's arms (Romeo); the flowers in the Duchesse de Guise's hair, which she is still wearing for the forceful Fifth act (Hamlet). Less specific but equally significant parallels and echoes may be seen in the idea of fate and the stars, centred in the character of Ruggieri, who seems an amalgam of Friar Lawrence and the weird sisters; and the ruthlessness of Guise, together with his vindictiveness towards the young page Arthur, which recalls Macbeth and Richard III. Many of these motifs were, admittedly, to be found also in melodrama; nor was Shakespeare alone in serving as a major source for Dumas. Schiller's Don Carlos was used extensively, with whole sections of dialogue incorporated into Dumas's text. Scott's The Abbot provided the idea for the Duc de Guise's iron gauntlet. The English theatre season, however, offered living and recent

proof of the dramatic power of such elements. As Gautier recalled, "Comme tout cela était jeune, nouveau, étrangement coloré, d'enivrante et forte saveur! La tête nous en tournait; il semblait qu'on entrait dans des mondes inconnus."[18]

The detailed realism which such elements contributed was made part of the structure by Dumas, following Shakespeare. To them he added background settings and choreography to give conviction and solidity to the central conflicts of the play. Dumas, like Vigny and Hugo, took a close interest in the smallest details of the staging, and, although tactfully professing to bow to the greater experience of the actors, attended rehearsals regularly. Taylor has been credited with overall control of the mise en scène, while Albertin, the stage-director, may have been responsible for the physical aspects of the production. Albertin edited a livret de scène,[19] one of the earliest of a stream of similar booklets which were published to enable provincial theatres to follow the broad lines of Parisian productions. While many of the actual stage-directions are incorporated by Dumas in his full published text, the livret supplements them in several instances, besides giving full descriptions of costumes and stage-settings, including "accessoires", a term which embraces both furniture and props. In these latter respects particularly, the livrets provide far more information than the contemporary English editions of plays reflecting the usage at Covent Garden and Drury Lane such as those of Bell or Oxberry.

The setting for Act One demonstrates how Dumas incorporated into his play an enthusiasm for the mechanics of staging, for the action calls both for a secret door, and, more demandingly, for a concealed alcove which opens to reveal the drugged Duchesse de Guise sleeping on a sofa, a sofa which in scene four glides forward into the main part of the room. The

accessoires comprised: a round table, an armchair, a lighted lamp, ink-stand, pens, paper, a sphere, a sandglass, a flask, a pile of books on the ground near the table, slates with calculations on them, a domino in black velvet. The play opens to silent action: Ruggieri, one knee on the ground (or, according to Dumas' published text, leaning on his elbow)"with a book of astrology open in front of him; he takes measurements with a compass." More daring was the opening of Act Two, where the courtiers were elegantly disposed about the stage: one was stage-right lounging on the King's seat (Joyeuse, the effeminate favourite) with Saint-Mégrin beside him, two at sword-play in the background, and a fifth seated stage-left studying a chessboard, an arrangement, according to the critic of La Quotidienne, that had "a liveliness and originality which one could not easily describe".[20] To the traditionalists, the fact that Joyeuse was playing with a cup-and-ball, and that later in the Act Saint-Mégrin snatches a kind of giant pea-shooter and insults the Duc de Guise by hitting him in the chest with a pellet, were additional causes for censure. But Dumas has already prepared for the action by having Mégrin chop his glove to pieces with his dagger before the entry of the King and Guise, so that for an audience the grotesque insult is supported by the more private violence of the previous scene. This patterning of action is a regular feature of the play, invariably clarified by some physical accessory; two examples are the letters of Acts Three and Four, where first the Duc de Guise forces the Duchesse to sign a private letter to her undeclared lover, and then the King compels Guise to sign a public statement creating the King head of the League; and the notorious episode in which the Duc squeezes the Duchesse's arm in his iron gauntlet, the same bruised arm which the Duchesse in Act Five places as a bolt (like Catherine Bar-the-door Douglas) to secure the door and allow Saint-Mégrin to escape. The scene of the dictated letter and the tortured arm is thick with stage-directions;

one interesting note that appears in the Dumas text but not in the livret, and which exemplifies the kind of physical realism the more extreme Romantics craved, is the following:

> (While he folds the letter, madame de Guise draws back her sleeve, to reveal blueish marks on her arm.)

What saves the tone from lapsing into pure, or more extreme, melodrama, is a certain restraint (or, less kindly, flatness) in the dialogue, a kind of mock-courtly French equivalent of the stiff upper lip:

> "Duchesse de Guise: What would the nobility of France say, if they knew that the Duc of Guise had wounded the arm of a woman with the gauntlet of a chevalier?"[21]

This reserve, in conjunction with such elements as the brittle frivolity of the court favourites, the feeble indecision of the king, the worldly scheming of Catherine de Medici, contributed to a thread of irony which gave relief to the more blatant curtain-lines of the Duc de Guise and the fervent love declarations of Saint-Mégrin.

(fig. 42)

The major roles were taken by Mlle Mars (Duchesse de Guise); Joanny (Duc de Guise); Firmin (Saint-Mégrin); and Michelot (Henri III). Only Michelot received much adverse criticism, for playing a King as an imbecile - it was hinted even that he was parodying Charles X; he seems to have modified his performance after the play's opening. It is clear that the actors, even more than Dumas, were apprehensive about the play's reception, and sought to avoid emphasising any element which might provoke hostility. Joanny recorded in his Journal: "I acted my Duc de Guise very well, while seeking to soften by my interpretation his savage brutality".[22] In the role of the Duchesse de Guise, Mlle Mars' background in genteel comedy provided her with all the means to express the conflicts between reason and passion, between modesty and the truth of the heart; the more violent feelings and actions of Act Three and Act Five did not lie within

her accustomed range. However, even the implacably hostile Courrier des Théâtres acknowledged that she was "superb, tragic, harrowing";[23] the comtesse Dash, on the other hand, recorded in her Memoirs that the romantics thought her "too well-groomed"[24] - an indication, perhaps, of an attempt to soften her interpretation of the role in a similar way to Joanny. Behind the instinct of Mlle Mars lay the same kind of taste that had made Delécluze react to Delacroix's Scènes de Massacre à Chios: "M. Delacroix has a very fine talent, but he should remember that French taste is noble and pure, and that we still place a great distinction between the touching pictures of Racine and the bloody dramas of Shakespeare".[25]

The conservative restraint displayed by Mlle Mars in Henri III permeated Casimir Delavigne's play Marino Faliero, which had been accepted by the Théâtre-Français, but whose production was postponed to accommodate the extended run of Henri III. Delavigne's play represents a modified classicism. Its verse generally accords with the traditional form of French tragedy, but there is a greater freedom which is superficially reminiscent of Hugo. The nature of the subject matter - as with Byron's version, the conflict between the personal and the public - could not be further from that of regular neo-classical tragedy; and the richness of the Venetian context, the variety and elaboration of the scenes, the occasional but effective use of spectacle, and especially the sense of intense passion, make it a work which seems to respond to the flowing current of Romanticism. Delavigne, however, explicitly refused to ally himself to any system or party:

> "Deux systèmes partagent la littérature. Dans lequel des deux cet ouvrage a-t-il été composé? C'est ce que je ne déciderai pas, et ce qui d'ailleurs me paraît être de peu d'importance."[26]

Delavigne's play clearly takes close account of Byron's, which had been published in France in 1821. The broad handling of the material, the

characterisation, even the more detailed organization of particular scenes, reflect Byron's prototype. For example, we may compare the setting of Byron's Act Three Scene One:

> "Scene, the Space between the Canal and the Church of San Giovanni e San Paolo. An equestrian Statue before it. - A Gondola lies in the Canal at some distance."

with Delavigne's description of Act Three:

> "La place de Saint-Jean-et-Paul: l'église d'un côté, le canal de l'autre; une statue au milieu du théâtre. Près du canal une madone éclairée par une lampe."

Byron uses the setting for one important scene only, in which the Doge overcomes his inner conflict and commits himself to the cause of the conspirators. Delavigne makes the setting (Fig. 43) serve not only this purpose - which is accomplished largely in one twenty-line soliloquy (as against the forty-seven lines Byron gives the Doge) - but also as the place of encounter between the Doge and the conspirators, and for the duel between Fernando and Sténo. (The contrast in the number of settings marks one important difference between the plays, Byron using twelve, while Delavigne coincides the shifts of setting with the five act divisions.) The equestrian statue, which Byron, bending history, converted from Bartolomeo Colleoni to a Faliero ancestor, is similarly used by Delavigne as a stage image of the Falieros who rest in the church vault. First, Byron's Doge:

> " Tall fane!
> Where sleep my fathers, whose dim statues shadow
> The floor which doth divide us from the dead,
> Where all the pregnant hearts of our bold blood,
> Moulder'd into a mite of ashes, hold
> In one shrunk heap what once made many heroes,
> When what is now a handful shook the earth -
> Fane of the tutelar saints who guard our house!
> Vault where two Doges rest - my sires! who died
> The one of toil, the other in the field,
> With a long race of other lineal chiefs
> And sages, whose great labours, wounds, and state
> I have inherited, - let the graves gape,
> Till all thine aisles be peopled with the dead,
> And pour them from thy portals to gaze on me!"

Delavigne's Doge links the apostrophe to the two interred princes more abruptly with the physical presence of the statue:

> "Deux princes dont je sors dorment dans ces murailles;
> Ce qui n'est plus que cendre a gagné des batailles.
> Ils m'entendront!...Eh bien! Levez-vous à ma voix.
> Regardez ces cheveux blanchis par tant d'exploits,
> Et, de vos doigts glacés comptant mes cicatrices,
> Aux crimes des ingrats mesurez leurs supplices!
> O toi, qu'on rapporta sur ton noble étendard,
> Vaincu par la fortune où j'ai vaincu plus tard,
> Vaillant Ordelafo, dont je vois la statue,
> Tends cette main de marbre à ton race abattue;"[27]

A quotation of this length indicates Delavigne's pervasive use of Byron as a source both in terms of physical setting and its dramatic exploitation, and in his widespread echoing of Byron's ideas and images. At the same time, Delavigne's greater economy is apparent, though not necessarily his dramatic intensity or effectiveness.

In certain respects, Delavigne elaborates some of Byron's touches of local colour: for instance, the moored gondola of Byron's stage description. Pietro, one of the conspirators in Delavigne's version, is a leader of the gondoliers; and in Act Three Scene Three a gondolier's song announces the approach of a gondola which stops at the canal edge to deliver Fernando and Sténo for their duel. The plinth of the statue becomes the location for Fernando's dying moments.

This duel, and the liaison between Fernando, the Doge's nephew and adopted son, and Eléna, the Doge's wife, constitute Delavigne's major contribution and invention to the plot of his Marino Faliero. Byron's Angiolina is a remarkable study in chaste fidelity, but not, certainly by the standards of the day, a particularly compelling dramatic character. Byron, to avoid comparisons with Shakespeare or Otway, deliberately ignored sexual jealousy as a motive to account for the Doge's reaction to Sténo's insult and its mild punishment by the Council of Ten. Delavigne invented a liaison between Eléna and Fernando, but a liaison in which each was torn

between passion for each other and love and respect for the Doge. This led Fernando, from a compulsion born partly of shame, to challenge Sténo in order to avenge the Doge's honour; and eventually to two emotive scenes between Eléna and the Doge. In the first of these she confesses and the Doge, Othello-like, prepares to kill her but is unable to carry out the act; in the second, he and Eléna are reconciled in the last moments before his execution. The complexity of motive which lies behind the actions of Eléna and Fernando reflects those of other central characters, notably the Doge himself and Bertram, the conspirator who betrays the plot in an attempt to save the life of Lioni, one of the Ten who has been his benefactor. In respect of these two characters, Delavigne follows the broad lines laid down by Byron.

Delavigne was obviously sensitive about suggestions that his play was merely a translation of Byron. He met the charge in his preface:

> "Ce reproche est injuste. J'ai dû me rencontrer avec lui dans quelques scènes données par l'histoire; mais la marche de l'action, les ressorts qui la conduisent et la soutiennent, le développement des caractères et des passions qui la modifient et l'animent, tout est différent. Si je n'ai pas hésité à m'approprier plusieurs des inspirations d'un poète que j'admire autant que personne, plus souvent aussi je me suis mis en opposition avec lui pour rester moi-même."[28]

This disclaimer does not altogether answer the case for proving Delavigne's close dependence on Byron, not least in a vital scene such as Act Three, in no sense "given by history", where Delavigne follows Byron in crucial particulars. On the other hand, Delavigne's treatment of the Doge's wife is his own, and this inevitably affects much of the subsequent structure as well as the mood and emotional quality. The personal is emphasised at the expense of political considerations, and Delavigne's interests are made to appear closer to those of Dumas's dramas. Beside Delavigne's, Byron's tragedy seems uncompromisingly pure and ascetic in the French classical tradition.

In the Examen Critique appended to Marino Faliero in Delavigne's collected works, there is a cogent analysis of Byron's dramatic method, and especially of his characterisation of Angiolina:

> "...dans son triste drame, Lord Byron s'est traîné à la remorque des annalistes italiens. Les détails de sa tragédie sont attachants, mais à l'exception de son Angiolina, la femme doge, qu'il a embellie de tous les attraits de la jeunesse et de la vertu, ses personnages ne sont ni plus vivement colorés, ni plus expressifs que ceux de l'histoire. Cette Angiolina même, dont le nom semble emprunté de ses qualités angéliques, serait divine dans une élégie; dans un drame, sa perfection est un défaut."

It is significant that fidelity to historical truth is regarded as a failing in Byron's drama. The critic proceeds to comment upon the lukewarm response of the English public with the observation: "John Bull veut être remué fortement."[29]

The predilection of English audiences for violent action and correspondingly violent emotional effects was a widespread French simplification. Lady Morgan, recounting a disagreement with a French woman about the general insipidity of some modern French tragedy, records the final retort:

> "'Voilà bien une critique à l'Anglaise! Tenez, Madame! allez voir l'Iphigénie en Tauride; voilà une fille de tuée pour vous, - là;' supposing that, accustomed to the 'monstrous farces' of my national theatre, a murder or two was quite necessary, to make any piece interesting to my ferocious English taste."[30]

There is something ironic in Byron, an extreme romanticist in French opinion, being described as excessively classical in comparison to Delavigne, himself a somewhat conservative dramatist. Marino Faliero, though demonstrably superior to many plays that enjoyed popular successes, has an interesting but muted role in the transition of French drama, brought about in part by the circumstances of its first production. Intended originally for the Théâtre-Français, with the part of Eléna destined for Mlle Mars, it was offered to the Porte-Saint-Martin, where Frédérick Lemaître rehearsed the part of the Doge.[31] However, because of

Lemaître's involvement with another theatre, the Ambigu, the part was withdrawn from him and given to Ligier, of the Comédie-Française, who played opposite Marie Dorval as Eléna on May 30th, 1829. Later the same year, following a series of complex law-suits involving Lemaître and his contractual obligations, the play was revived at the Porte-Saint-Martin, with Lemaître and Dorval. This was the first occasion that Lemaître assumed a leading role in a tragedy written in verse, and there was considerable interest generated in the comparison between the interpretation of someone such as Ligier from the Comédie-Française and of the leading actor of the boulevards. Lemaître was judged superior to Ligier. However, he never felt at ease in verse tragedy, and this was, in addition, Marie Dorval's first encounter with an alexandrine. After thirteen performances, Lemaître left the Porte-Saint-Martin for the Ambigu.

Crosnier ensured that Marino Faliero was given a strong production. The tragedy was, in fact, announced as 'mélodrame'; accordingly, in spite of Delavigne's forcible protests, the play was provided with a full orchestral accompaniment, which was entrusted to Rossini. The sets and costumes were executed with lavish attention to detail and 'couleur locale': the sets were the work of Ciceri, Charles Séchan and Lefèvre, and the costumes were by Paul Delaroche. Ciceri's set for Act Three is a powerful realisation of the setting first created by Byron. According to the Courrier des Théâtres, it was "une mise en scène et des décors parfaitement soignées."[32]

Descotes, in his appraisal of Delavigne in Le Public de théâtre et son histoire, notes that Marino Faliero appeared in the last months of Charles X's reign. Quoting the Doge's confession from Act Three Scene Three:

"Je ne veux pas descendre, et me fais citoyen"

Descotes comments: "Citoyen; c'est là le mot le plus noble du vocabulaire de Casimir Delavigne. Et l'on comprend sans peine que l'avènement de

Louis-Philippe, auquel il était lié par une amitié personnelle, l'ait comblé, comme il comblait son public."[33] Delavigne and his bourgeois public shared a number of ideas and attitudes: liberal, moderately anti-clerical, passionately nationalistic. He shared, too, their interest in and yet disquiet at the experiments of the Romantics: "Comme son public, Delavigne sentait la nécessité de renouveler les formes théâtrales; comme lui, il n'admettait que les demi-mesures."[34] More trenchantly, Delavigne is placed by Gautier firmly below Hugo:

> "Sous Delacroix, vous avez Delaroche; sous Rossini, Donizetti; sous Victor Hugo, M. Casimir Delavigne.
>
> A propos de Delaroche, sa peinture est la meilleure idée approximative qu'on peut donner de la poésie de M. Delavigne; les tableaux du peintre sont d'excellents sujets de tragédie pour le poëte, et les tragédies du poëte seraient d'excellents sujets de tableaux pour le peintre; chez tous les deux, même exécution pénible et patiente, même couleur plombée et fatiguée, même recherche de la fausse correction et du faux dramatique."[35]

After the postponement of his Roméo et Juliette, Vigny addressed himself to the translation of Othello. This was both a natural and yet somewhat surprising choice. Of all Shakespeare's tragedies, it was the most classical in construction, with the action restricted to Cyprus after the first act, and a comparable restriction in theme and tone. Yet the prominence of a mundane object like the handkerchief, the barbaric violence offered by Othello to Desdemona, and the ignobility of Cassio's drunkenness, were all elements to which the traditionalists would take exception - and, indeed, had taken exception, notoriously in the 1822 Penley attempt, but to a substantial degree even during the 1827-28 season. There were signs, however, in the critical reactions to successive performances of the English theatre season, of a shift in attitude. The Kemble/Smithson interpretation was markedly the least successful of their three Shakespearean offerings; Kemble, who had acted so vividly in simulating the death throes of Romeo, took equal relish in his despatching of Desdemona - the Courrier

Français timed him at more than a minute for the stifling phase, before he completed the task with two blows from his dagger.[36] The circumstances caused widespread disgust: "A woman in bed between the sheets, faced by a monster who embraces her twice before suffocating her, as she begs in vain with pleas and tears, will always be an intolerable spectacle."[37] Yet the disgust was matched by the enthusiasm of the romantics, and a certain morbid fascination, which led to a repetition of the performance for Kemble's farewell before the Duchesse de Berry. In Delacroix's sardonic catalogue of Shakespearean excesses, "Hamlet raises his ghastly head, Othello whets that murderous dagger of his, so subversive of all dramatic law and order....Farewell to good taste!"[38] The ambivalence of the audience's response was still evident when Kean acted Othello in May, 1828. Vigny, who was present, declared that he blushed to write for a people whose reaction to Shakespeare, Othello and Kean was the most vulgar buzzing that the ignorant Parisians had ever given vent to in a theatre.[39] When, however, Macready played Othello for his farewell performance, it was hailed as a definitive interpretation, and he was dragged on to the forestage to receive the audience's tributes. It was Macready's analysis of the Moor's psychology which most forcibly impressed even the fervently romantic Magnin. "The scenes which follow that of the murder, scenes so varied and true in reading, but until now so cold and monotonous in the theatre, give Macready the opportunity to express with the most poignant truth all the tortures which tear at the Moor's distressed soul." A final note helps to explain the shift in the French audience's acceptance of this scene. "It ought to be she" (Desdemona) "it seems to us, and not Othello, who closes the bed-curtains and makes a barrier of them. Othello, alone in that room without a witness, can clearly only take that precaution in the interests of the spectators. The change we suggest would give more conviction to this otherwise laudable act of delicacy."[40]

The writing and staging of Le More de Venise became Vigny's act of homage to Shakespeare. In several respects he sought to improve on the traditions of the English theatre. For instance, he restored several scenes which were at this time omitted in England, including the willow-song scene, parts of Iago's first dialogue with Roderigo, and a partial restoration of the role of Bianca (omitted in performance); the willow-song scene, of course, was well-known in France from its equivalent in Rossini's Otello. In other respects, Vigny frequently, in his notes, cites English practice as his authority. For instance, his footnote to Act One scene one excuses his omission of various "too energetic" expressions of Iago: "All the best-known actors in England, Kean, Kemble, Young and Macready, habitually cut out words that are too broad."

Vigny worked on the last three Acts during the winter of 1828-29, and completed Acts One and Two during the spring. The play received a private reading on July 17th, and was then read and received officially by the Comédie-Française on July 21st. Hugo's Marion de Lorme had already been accepted on July 12th, but a problem concerning that play arose with the censor, and Vigny's adaptation was brought forward. Since the work was so well-known, much would depend on the physical realisation; and this accorded with the interests of both Vigny and Taylor. Where Henri III required three settings, the greater flexibility of Shakespeare's structure, as adapted by Vigny, required seven, two in Venice and five in Cyprus. Taylor provided, with some difficulty, a special budget of 9,500 francs.[41] Ciceri, who was becoming something of a specialist in Venetian settings, was commissioned to design the décors, and Johannot the costumes; the total sums spent amounted to 6210f for painting, 1385f for costumes, and 3730 francs for machinery to facilitate the changing of settings in view of the audience. Vigny's letter to Taylor demonstrates his immense concern with accuracy and probability: "Yet one more sacrifice, my dear Taylor; the

second act will certainly not require more than one setting, that of the port in Cyprus, as you have so perfectly devised it with a guard room on the right and the citadel on the left. Only, it will be absolutely essential to retain the moment when the Herald crosses the stage with the crowd. It is placed there to separate the entrance of Othello and Iago from their return and to make up for the lack of a change of setting."[42] Ciceri's two most striking scenes were this combined setting for Act Two, and Othello's palace in Cyprus, which was decorated with half-obliterated frescoes in the style of Giotto, as though it were the Duomo in Siena. Vigny's description for the Act Two setting is as follows: "The sun is setting, huge, red and barred with black clouds. A platform; a view of the sea and the harbour. On the left of the stage, a promontory and the citadel; on the right, a guard-room. A violent storm rages and whips the waves. The people of Cyprus are grouped on the shore with the sailors." A machine caused three small boats to pitch and toss on the waves, something of a novelty at the Théâtre-Français. It was this kind of experiment which forced Halévy to beg Taylor:

> "Du Théâtre-Français ne fais plus une optique,
> Le théâtre est un temple et non une boutique.
> Sans décors, sans machines, il a toujours fleuri.
> Il nous faut des Corneille et non des Ciceri."[43]

A note from Vigny advises theatres where the storm cannot be properly staged to omit certain lines from the text, such as Montano's:

> "Je crois
> Que jamais vents du nord si fougeux et si froids
> N'ont sur nous déchaîné les orages du pôle."

Vigny's literalism may strike one as somewhat naive, as might the spectacle of the cut-out boats; it also demonstrates a close attention to the particular; and especially to physical detail, that was still rare in the major theatres of both Paris and London.

If the interpretation of the décor owed much to the development of

concepts in France, the blocking and interpretation of character was heavily dependent upon English practice. In the scenes in the Doge's palace in Venice (Vigny, Act One Scenes 7-11), the Doge is seated on a throne, raised, with senators in front of him; when Othello enters, Vigny has the following direction:

"Othello enters first, stage left, followed by Cassio and Iago. He greets the Doge seated upstage centre and crosses right with Cassio. Iago remains left next to Rodrigo. Brabantio flings himself onto his senator's seat, which has been left vacant stage right."

A comparison with the Kemble promptbook[44] reveals sufficient similarities to suggest a direct relationship; some of these details could be gathered from English texts which incorporated stage-directions, but the stage arrangement reflects more than simple blocking patterns. In Act Five Scene two, the scene of the murder, Vigny's stage-directions are frequent, and explicit. The Kemble promptbook has only three in holograph between Othello's entry and Emilia being admitted: "Kisses Desdemona" at "I'll smell it on the tree"; "He smothers her" at "It is too late"; and "Stabs her with his dagger" at "So, - so, -"; and there are the two printed directions, "Emilia knocks at the door". Vigny first describes the scene: "Desdemona asleep on her bed", 'à moitié déshabillée', in a white dress, bare feet, her dark hair dishevelled": a comparison with the Devéria lithograph of Kemble and Smithson demonstrates a close dependence. Then "Othello enters, holding in his left hand a lamp, in his right a sword": this corresponds to the popular Kean engraving, and also to a much later Delacroix painting, though this latter probably reflects in addition (Fig. 44) Rossini's Otello, which calls for a harp. There follow a series of directions to the actor, indicating precise timings for various actions: "He puts his sword and his lamp on a table"; (line 8/9, More de Venise) "Sitting, without looking at her, talking softly" (line 30); or "He stabs

her without looking at her" (Scene 3, line 6).

These indications arose partly, no doubt, from the need to establish a tradition in France; but it is probable that they followed broadly both Vigny's observations of the English theatre, and the advice of Charles Mayne Young. Young had played the parts of both Othello and Iago, taking precedence from the 1807-8 season at Covent Garden over John Philip Kemble; Vigny records that Young advised him about English acting traditions, and especially on the interpretation of the character of Iago.[45] These comments Vigny transmitted to the actors at rehearsals; they were not always well received, and Michelot, after twice absenting himself, was replaced as Iago by the more amenable Périer. Joanny played Othello, and Mlle Mars Desdemona. Years later, when the somewhat strained period of preparation and rehearsal had faded, Vigny claimed: "I was able to transmit to Mlle Mars and to those who created the role of the Moor in French, my ideas, my intentions, and the Shakespearean traditions preserved in England."[46]

Both Joanny and Mars were widely praised, although they had to contend with much more concerted opposition from the claque than they experienced in Henri III; the word "mouchoir" was howled down at every repetition, and the scene of Desdemona undressing for bed was to many an unwelcome and unfitting example of naturalism. Against the argument of naturalism, the Figaro reminded its readers that "there are also other natural functions one performs on going to bed".[47] As for Périer as Iago, he "Englished" the role: "he imparted the intonation and gestures of those British actors with whom we amused ourselves a little while ago. That should not prevent him from refining his acting as the action develops."[48] Comparison with the English actors formed a common note of criticism. Of Joanny, Magnin wrote, "In the scenes of jealousy, in his melancholy farewells to war, and above all in the fifth act, he seemed to us to have profited with rare talent from the traditions which the English actors have left us; he was

inferior to none of them, Macready excepted." As for Mars, Magnin complained that everyone, classics and romantics alike, granted Macready and Miss Smithson the courtesy of silence. Why then should people stamp their feet and interrupt Mlle Mars, "who has shown herself as Desdemona to be more graceful and praiseworthy, and a greater tragic actress than even her rival ever was?"[49] Le More de Venise, however, for all its significance as a model of Romantic dramaturgy, and a vehicle for a developing style of acting, had a restricted success, with thirteen performances in 1829 and three in 1830.

There is so much that can be, and has been, written about Hernani that I propose to comment only on those elements which bear most heavily on the general development of this discussion. There were many reasons why Hernani was seen as a crucial issue. First, was Hugo's stature as a writer, and the realisation that his play was, in essence, his own response to the theoretical challenge laid out in his Préface de Cromwell. Secondly, following the serviceable but unremarkable prose dialogue of Henri III, and the sensitive yet necessarily dependent verse of Vigny's translation, Hugo's use of dramatic poetry was both inventive and of a quality to invite comparison with Racine or Molière. Hugo provided for French dramatic literature what arguably only Byron among English writers of his time proved capable of: a poetic language which reflected the dramatic tradition and at the same time conveyed first, the imaginative concerns of the Romantics, and secondly the vocabulary and speech rhythms appropriate to the contemporary world (which, for the Romantics, signified, in terms of drama, an unconventional vocabulary). Hugo, Dumas and Vigny, somewhat unjustly, all complained of the awkward temperaments of the actors who were largely responsible, with the directors and designers, for the success of their plays; but the actors, as Mlle Mars reminded Hugo repeatedly, were the ones who risked being hissed. Hence her stubborn

campaign against the line:

"Vous êtes mon lion superbe et généreux"

as reported by Dumas in his Memoirs,[50] which she moderated, at least on the opening night, to

"Vous êtes mon seigneur superbe et généreux;"

Firmin as Hernani had serious misgivings about his relatively colloquial opening line in Act I scene 4,

"Oui, de ta suite, ô roi! de ta suite! - J'en suis."

Juste Olivier, relying on the testimony of Sainte-Beuve, explained that "He said 'de ta suite', then stamped his foot, struggled to control himself, ran across stage first right, then left, came back, and found in all that activity a moment to breathe the 'j'en suis'."[51] Hugo reworked the offending line for subsequent performances. The extent of the entrenched prejudices with which the Romantics had to contend may be gauged from the hostile reception given to the very first line of the play, in which the mere presence of an enjambment was sufficient to proclaim Hugo's revolutionary tendencies:

"Serait-ce déj'lui? (Un nouveau coup) C'est bien à l'escalier Dérobé."

The entries in the journal of Joanny, who played Don Ruy Gomez, provide a laconic account of the continuing opposition, principally to the vocabulary and the rhythm of the verse. As Juste Olivier remarked, the spectators were "the same as ever, that is to say that they do not deserve a better theatre. They still base their judgment on isolated verses and have no grasp of the whole. They criticize one expression and applaud another..."[52] At Hernani, it was almost universally criticism:

"Friday 12th March 1830
Huge audience and still the same commotion. Not very pleasant except for the box-office." (This was the ninth performance)

Gustave-Adolphe (a tragedy by Arnault fils):
Sunday 28th March 1830
"This is an approved work, well acted and in good taste. So there is no one there. Those who come and represent good taste in hissing Hernani take care not to come to proper plays."
Hernani
Monday 29th March 1830
"It's more and more outrageous. It's degenerating to such a free for all that it's practically impossible to present the play."[53]

The opposition continued until the end of May; the actors were accused of shouting their parts; they had no alternative. When calm began to prevail in June, it was achieved because of the public's exhaustion. After the 36th performance on June 22nd, Joanny recorded: "The public seems to have had enough; - and so have I". There were only three further performances that year, each to small houses.

In terms of décor, Hernani was as well served by Taylor as the preceding two Romantic productions: Ciceri was engaged for the sets, and Louis Boulanger for the costumes. Another Mars anecdote is attached to the costumes, recounting how first she scribbled all over Boulanger's maquette for Doña Sol, and later insisted on wearing a highly unsuitable (in the sense of out of period) hat. But the mise en scène was generally praised, even by those who disapproved of other aspects of the production. "One feature alone merits unreserved praise, and that is the mise en scène, the costumes and settings do the greatest credit to M. Taylor and those who helped him on this occasion" - this was from the hostile Corsaire.[54] The perceptive use of music is noteworthy. First, there was no conventional musical accompaniment to the entry of the electors (Act 4 scene 4), which took place, after an initial fanfare, in complete silence, described by the equally hostile Courrier des Théâtres as an effect "of the finest truth";[55] on the other hand, the background music from off-stage in Act Five, representing the wedding celebration, was considered to be both appropriate and realistic.

There is a tension within the play between historical accuracy and spectacle on the one hand, and the expression of the darker, more impressionistic elements of passion. Each Act bears the direction "Il est nuit"; and the settings of at least Act One and Act Five recall Shakespeare; Act One is: "A bedchamber. Night. A lamp on the table" (Othello); and the garden terrace (Act 5), with the group of young men with masks in their hands, echoes Romeo and Juliet, as more clearly does the last scene of the deaths of Hernani and Doña Sol by poison. Act Four, with its powerful setting in the vaults of Charlemagne's tomb at Aix-la-Chapelle, and its great moment of theatre when Don Carlos emerges from the tomb to confront the conspirators, represents one pole of historical spectacle; Act Five, with the newly wedded Hernani and Doña Sol embracing death, like Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra, in poignant lyricism, the other pole of private anguish. It was in this act that Mlle Mars, whose "jeu classique" had given Hugo some disquiet in anticipation, exceeded the comparative restraint she had maintained as the Duchesse de Guise or Desdémona, and combined "the pathos of Mme Dorval and the primitive ingenuousness of Miss Smithson" in creating an effect of youth and beauty.[56]

This tension reflects the contradiction which Hugo claimed, in the Préface de Cromwell, to lie at the heart of poetry itself. "The poetry born of christianity, the poetry of our age is, then, the drama; the characteristic of this drama is the real; the real results from a quite natural combination of two archetypes, the sublime and the grotesque, which intertwine in the drama, as they intertwine in life and in creation. For true poetry, complete poetry, lies in the harmonising of contraries."[57] To achieve this combination, Hugo made substantial use of the apparatus of melodrama. Jean Massin, in the Preface to Hernani in his edition of the Oeuvres Complètes, lists the motifs: "Secret staircase of Act One,

nocturnal kidnapping of Act Two, hidden dagger...and concealed hiding place behind a portrait in Act Three, an emperor's tomb and an underground assignation of masqued conspirators with every conceivable coup de théâtre in Act Four, and, for the bouquet of Act Five, the blessed trinity of horn, mask and poison."[58] It was by such bold, external means that Hugo conveyed the interior drama of the imagination; but these external means were given detailed, naturalistic expression in terms of both décor and pantomime, to set against the highly charged and essentially (for all its innovations) unnaturalistic impact of the dramatic poetry.

Hugo's play has many of the attributes of opera: indeed, in many ways the form of opera was a much more suitable vehicle for the Romantic imagination than drama. (Verdi's Hernani of 1855 was preceded by another Verdi version in 1836, Le Proscrit, and a libretto by G. Rossi for Gabusi in 1834.) One opera which had already exploited the real in terms of staging was Auber's La Muette de Portici, with a libretto by Scribe and Germain Delavigne, which had been presented at the Opéra on February 29th, 1828. The Fifth Act featured the eruption of Vesuvius, a spectacle already included by Daguerre in his diorama, by Pixérécourt in Tête de Mort ou les Ruines de Pompéi (December 9th, 1827) and by Lafortelle and Carafa in the comic-opera Masaniello ou le Pêcheur napolitain. Ciceri, commissioned to design the sets (Fig. 45), was sent to Italy to study at first hand the machinery used at la Scala to portray the disaster in Pacini's l'Ultimo giorno di Pompeia. Ciceri's solution was to use a "rideau de manoeuvre", a second backcloth depicting Vesuvius in eruption which was suddenly flown in to the accompaniment of every conceivable kind of sound-effect and a hail of miscellaneous stones clattering down from the flies.[59] The emphasis on realism was repeated in the carefully worked out scenes of Neapolitan life choreographed by Aumer, Duponchel and Solomé (who produced a livret of the mise en scène): the Neapolitan market was supplied with sellers of cheese

and hams, hawkers of nuts and ices. Accompanying these manifestations of the real was a scenario featuring many familiar elements of historical or domestic melodrama, most notably the poor but virtuous hero, the fisherman Masaniello, and his mute sister, Fenella, wronged by the viceroy's son. Auber's music imparted a marked coherence and vitality. The opera's contemporary relevance and force, however, may be judged from the circumstance that its presentation in Brussels in 1830 is credited with launching the revolution. Aesthetically, the opera is remarkable for its deployment of a dancer, or sometimes an actress, in the mimed role of Fenella. Mlle Noblet created the role. On December 5th, 1830, Harriet Smithson performed it during a benefit at the Opéra, which prompted the following comparison between English and French styles in the Figaro:

> "Energy and passion are the chief qualities of Miss Smithson; but often exaggeration mars her acting, and leads her into faults and gestures which French taste condemns."[60]

Such a comment may arise from a difference in style between pantomime in drama and in opera; yet, in a context of Vesuvius erupting, it suggests a certain modification in terms of acting theory from the yearning for that "truth to nature" which characterised the first critical reaction to Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet in 1827.

The actors who were most prominent in the years immediately succeeding Hernani were seen principally not at the Théâtre-Français but at the Odéon and the Porte-Saint-Martin. For different and complex reasons, the new drama of Hugo, Dumas and Vigny was more usually made available to Harel and Crosnier than to the Comédie Française. Frédérick Lemaître was engaged by Harel at the Odéon shortly before the July Revolution broke out, where he duly played opposite the ample Mlle George. (As Gautier wrote, "How many fat queens and outsize empresses have we not disinterred for her benefit!"[61]) Since Mlle George specialised in tragedy, Frédérick Lemaître was persuaded to appear in another verse tragedy, a revival of Delavigne's

Les Vêpres Siciliennes. The restrained power of his acting was not affected; the Corsaire referred to "his brusque gestures" and "sombre declamation",[62] and the Figaro commented that he was "an ardent actor with no desire to gain applause the easy way";[63] but after a number of experiments, including Ducis' Hamlet and Othello, and Racine's Iphigénie, Lemaître decided to concentrate on modern drama. One notable vehicle for him was Dumas's collaborative Napoléon Bonaparte, including the spectacles of the burning of Moscow and the retreat across the Beresina, (January 10th, 1831). Lemaître and Mlle George were praised in Vigny's La Maréchale d'Ancre (June 21st, 1831), but the play did not fire the public, although played thirty times: Lemaître's part of Concini was not well suited to him, and it was Mlle Noblet as Isabella who received most enthusiasm. It seems probable that Vigny intended the role of La Maréchale for Marie Dorval, then at the Porte-Saint-Martin, but transferred the play to the Odéon to avoid a clash with Marion de Lorme, set in the same period, and already accepted by Crosnier.

Meanwhile, Dumas had withdrawn his drama of modern life, Antony, from the Théâtre-Français, in reaction, by his own account, to the difficulties created by Mlle Mars and Firmin, and achieved its acceptance by Crosnier at the Porte-Saint-Martin by means of arousing the enthusiasm of first Mme Dorval and then, through her, Bocage. Bocage was inferior as an actor to Lemaître; his nasal intonation caused him to be described as "one of Frédérick Lemaître's colds in the head", but in terms of appearance he suited the part of Antony - "a handsome man of thirty-five or so, with dark hair and fine white teeth, and beautiful mysterious eyes which could express three essentials on stage - roughness, determination and melancholy."[64]

Dumas's direct approach to Mme Dorval inaugurated a period of close, often intimate, collaboration between the dramatists and their interpreters.

(Fig.46)
Dumas commented: "Bocage showed me his costume. I say costume, for although Antony was clad like an ordinary mortal, in a cravat, frock-coat, waistcoat and trousers, there had to be, on account of the eccentricity of the character, something peculiar in the set of the cravat and shape of the waistcoat, in the cut of the coat and trousers. Moreover, Bocage had adapted my own ideas on the subject, and, in these clothes, people immediately understood that the actor did not merely represent an ordinary man."[65]

The ordinary, or more accurately the extension and heightening of the ordinary, is a fundamental element to Antony. As Dumas admitted, without
(Fig.47)
the famous curtain-line, "Elle me résistait: je l'ai assassinée", the play would have been no more than an ordinary intrigue of adultery. The settings contained little unusual, apart from Antony's forced entry via a broken window and the balcony into Adèle's inn bedroom. Dumas recalled the impact Dorval was able to achieve with "the two very simple sentences, 'But this door will not shut' and 'No accident has ever happened in your hotel, Madame?'."[66] The extraordinary lay in the extremity of the passion and the violence of action into which it erupted, a combination which clearly echoed the instincts of a generation, who suddenly filled the salons "with crowds of young men with pale faces, bushy eye-brows, bony frames, long black hair, and eyes veiled by tortoiseshell eye-glasses".[67] Marie
(Fig.48)
Dorval's acting raised the ordinary, the everyday, to the level of, wrote the Figaro, "the sublime. And this is how she does it: she wept as people normally weep with tears; she screamed and cursed like women do, tearing her hair, throwing flowers, clawing her cheeks, rumpling her dress, even sometimes hoisting it, with no respect for the Conservatoire, to her knees; all the things that people do in the market place just as they do in the drawing-room when they forget themselves, when there is no longer marchioness in satin or duchess in silk, but simply a woman, and only a

woman."[68]

Towards the end of 1831 Harel assumed the lease of the Porte-Saint-Martin, and his first presentation was Richard Darlington, written by Dumas in collaboration with Goubaux and Beudin (authors of Trente Ans). This play represented the more expansive side of the new dramaturgy, with large-scale scenes including an election campaign and one set in the House of Commons itself. Dumas admitted that the play's "wholly modern colouring, political theme, vivid and rather brutal treatment were more in accord with my own age and taste than studies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries."[69] The brutal made convincing was an area where Lemaître excelled. Louise Noblet as Jenny screamed in genuine terror as Lemaître advanced upon her. Dumas called the scene one of the "most frightening things I have ever seen on stage. When Jenny asked Richard, 'What are you going to do?' and he replied, 'I don't know, but say your prayers!' a tremendous shudder went through the whole house..."[70] Legouvé recalls a piece of stage business devised by Lemaître for his re-appearance on the balcony: "...he got the actress who played Jenny to drop her muslin veil as she fled from him on to the balcony. This veil was the first thing that met Frédérick's gaze as he came back on stage. A lesser actor would have shuddered at the sight, for it was like Jenny's ghost. But Frédérick ran up to the veil, snatched it up and stuffed it into his pocket as if it had been a handkerchief. Then, with that insolent sang-froid that was his alone, he went to open the door to his prospective father-in-law with the end of the veil fluttering from his pocket."[71] It was the performance of Frédérick Lemaître as Darlington that consolidated his reputation as the leading actor in France. It is significant that the extra-textual elements of acting, together with the mise en scène, have assumed such prominence in the assessment of a play's quality.

In contrast with the expansiveness, the luxuriance, of Dumas's and

Hugo's dramatic writing is Vigny's Chatterton, which he forced upon the Théâtre-Français in order to establish Mme Dorval's career in that company, and of which only his influential connections outside the theatre could have guaranteed the production. This play is one of the most interesting, and at the same time atypical, examples of the new drama. It is characterised by a most unromantic austerity, both of style and construction. It is located in one building, the back-premises of a successful bourgeois merchant, though it requires two contrasting settings; the action takes place in one day; the number of characters is restricted to eight, of whom the two lords Lauderdale and Kingston are minimal roles, though Vigny makes intermittent but telling use of supernumeraries, especially the two young children of Kitty Bell. The action is so simple that it was described, a little unfairly, by Balzac: Act One: Ought I to kill myself?; Act Two: I ought to kill myself; Act Three: I kill myself. The costumes of John Bell, Kitty Bell, Chatterton and the Quaker gave the dominant tone: brown, grey, black, grey, against which those of Lord Talbot (scarlet hunting-coat) and the Lord Mayor make a vivid contrast. The setting is so integral to the drama that it is worth quoting in full:

> "The stage represents a spacious apartment; the affluent and comfortable living quarters of John Bell's establishment. On the spectator's left, a fire-place, with a coal fire burning. On the right, the door of Kitty Bell's bedroom. At the back, a large glass door: through the small panes can be seen a well-stocked shop; a large spiral staircase leads to several narrow, dark doors, amongst which is the door of Chatterton's little room.
>
> The Quaker is reading in one corner of the room, on the left. On the right Kitty Bell is seated; at her feet a small boy on a stool; a young girl is standing by her side."[72]

The comfort and affluence of the room, its very dimensions, the warm glow of the fire, are emphasised in order to prepare for the marked contrast of the only other setting, that of Chatterton's room behind its narrow, dark door, which is not seen until the third of the play's three acts, and then

only for two scenes: "Chatterton's room, dark, small, bleak, no fire, the bed pitiful and in disorder". Vigny by no means wanted the kind of crowded set, full of surplus furniture and objects, that became fashionable as the movement towards realism accelerated. His wish as expressed in his note "Sur les représentations du drame"[73] was that the stage-picture should present the severe and simple appearance of a Flemish painting, an image that he repeated when writing to a friend from Rouen: "Take care that the mise en scène is simple and poetic. That the play's ensemble gives the feeling...of a kind of Flemish painting."[74] That sense of stillness and equilibrium, at once so peaceful and vulnerable, is reinforced by the physical separation of the dark-clothed, elderly Quaker on one side of the stage, and the mother with her two children on the other; and emphasised a moment later as Kitty Bell listens for the angry voice of her husband and quietens her children. So the tensions presented spatially upon the set, between the two levels, the richness below and the cramped poverty above, and between the two sides of the stage, is immediately developed further in the conflict between the on-stage and the off-stage world.

The set-designer Charles Séchan, a pupil of Ciceri, recalled the effect of the setting in Gautier's poetic evocation:

> "It was from my studio, in fact, that the two settings for Chatterton were drawn: the one representing Chatterton's room, 'that bare, cold room (wrote Théophile Gautier), scarcely illumined by a pitiful lamp and into which the moon peered through fog-smeared panes with her dead-white face, sad and solitary companion for a young soul in agony, failing inspiration of a task so violently disheartened; with that narrow pallet, more like a coffin than a bed, beside which Chatterton willed his pure thoughts to be sold for silver like a courtesan..!'"[75]

It is significant that it is the setting itself, or rather the figure within the setting, and not the acting, which serves to convey, through Gautier's description, so powerful an image, and one so redolent of the tone and atmosphere of Vigny's play.

The winding staircase, which is a working feature of the arrière-boutique setting, became notorious because of Mme Dorval's spectacular collapse and slide down it in Act Three scene nine, giving rise to the story that she had it built at her own request. The staircase is clearly integral to the play's structure and conception. It is featured strongly, moreover, in the section of Stello which describes Chatterton's death (and which pre-dates the play):

"Since I was still holding him firmly up by the shoulders, he kicked the little vial with his foot. It rolled down the stairs, evidently coming to rest near the bottom steps where Kitty had been sitting, for I heard a cry, and shaky footsteps began to ascend the staircase."[76]

What Mme Dorval must certainly have invented is her headlong slide; in Vigny's manuscript is the direction: "Elle crie, redescend l'escalier et tombe sur la dernière marche", amended in the first published edition (1835) to "Elle crie, glisse à demi-morte sur la rampe de l'escalier, et tombe etc." Zola, commenting on a revival of Chatterton in "Le Naturalisme au Théâtre", and not much liking what he saw, claimed that he came out "with the conviction that the staircase was the most important character in the drama".[77] At least his comments drew attention to the crucial moments when it is used by Vigny: the slow descent of Chatterton in Act One scene four, down to the apartment inhabited at the time only by the Quaker and the young girl Rachel; his rapid ascent in Act Two scene five, as he drives himself back to work as though he was one of Bell's employees; and the increasingly significant passages of the third act, first the two children going up to the room with food, secondly Chatterton descending with them to his encounter with Lord Talbot, thirdly the ominous ascent of the dying poet, followed by the Quaker and Kitty, and finally Kitty's own headlong fall which is the prelude to her death.

Chatterton, notorious for one spectacular and theatrical moment, is a

work which vigorously resists categorisation. Vigny, in the last lines of his Dernière Nuit de travail, announces an intention wholly different to one which might be inferred from Marie Dorval's dégringolade:

> "Je crois surtout à l'avenir et au besoin universal de choses sérieuses; maintenant que l'amusement des yeux par des surprises enfantines fait sourire tout le monde au milieu même de ses grandes aventures, c'est, ce me semble, le temps du DRAME DE LA PENSÉE."[78]

That phrase, "l'amusement des yeux par des surprises enfantines", seems to throw down a challenge to the Romantic drama of Dumas and Hugo. It is possible that Vigny was betrayed by his love for Marie Dorval into abandoning the austerity of his concept; on the other hand, the death-fall was the climax of an interpretation of Kitty Bell which had emphasised her timidity and suppressed passion until that moment of revelation. Marie Dorval's was, too, clearly the central and unifying performance of the production.

The tension between the essentially cerebral nature of Vigny's concept, with its focus on the role of the artist-poet in contemporary society, and its physical and theatrical realisation, is apparent in the play's form. In places Chatterton seems to be a drame bourgeois, almost as though Vigny is writing to illustrate the principles of Diderot. At others, he appears to reflect the stereotypes and motifs of popular, sentimental mélodrame - the kindly old Quaker, the tyrannical husband, the death of Kitty Bell from a broken heart. As W.D. Howarth comments:

> "In view of the intensity of the focus on the central character's predicament, leading to the final catastrophe, the play might well have been a powerful example of domestic tragedy, was it not for certain Romantic clichés which make of Vigny's characters symbols rather than convincing individuals."[79]

In performance, however, these clichés could be transformed into strengths. Chatterton was written at least in part to provide a leading role for Marie Dorval at the Comédie-Française. Ferocious battles and rivalries preceded

the rehearsal period. Jouslin de la Salle, by now Commissaire Royal, had attempted earlier to present Dorval in Antony. He was blocked by the actors' committee, and the controversy produced an outburst from the Constitutionnel about "grotesque and immoral exhibitions which bring shame to our times, affront public modesty, and exert a deadly influence on society".[80] Chatterton would have been similarly excluded by the actors had it not been for the interest of Louis-Philippe. Apart from Marie Dorval as Kitty Bell, the cast included Joanny as the Quaker, Guiaud as John Bell - Ligier, refused the part, submitted his resignation as sociétaire - and Geffroy as Chatterton. Geffroy was an able actor but, according to Vigny, deficient in enthusiasm, a quality essential for the role of Chatterton - Bocage, Marie Dorval's partner in Antony, would have been more appropriate casting. Vigny rehearsed Geffroy at his own house more than once, and in the last scene, at least, he was able to match the depth of feeling which Marie Dorval conveyed throughout: "They play this in low tones, at the back of the stage, in the most melancholy and touching way imaginable."[81] Joanny, as the Quaker, was solidly dependable as always. Of all the actors of the Comédie-Française, he was the most sympathetic towards Romantic drama, though even he is reported to have protested about the staircase - "un escalier, comme dans Robert Macaire!" He was criticised, albeit by the Courrier des Théâtres, for not acting in a sufficiently restrained manner: Joanny "y fait des grands bras comme dans la tragédie."[82]

The play's triumph, however, rested upon Marie Dorval's portrayal of Kitty Bell, a role which Vigny had expanded and developed from the prototype in Stello, as Maurice Descotes has demonstrated.[83] In a process comparable to Vigny incorporating into the rarefied concept of Chatterton the motifs and forms of popular theatre, Marie Dorval's acting reflected her wide experience of the boulevard tradition. Her skill in pantomime,

especially in scenes of pathos; her ability to convey an intensity of passion largely by understatement, until the climactic outburst of the final Act; her detailed command of the physical means of expression of her death agony - these features were, in fact, those elements of Harriet Smithson's acting, and of English acting in general, which were so admired by the French commentators of the Théâtre anglais. Marie Dorval had on several occasions been compared directly to Harriet Smithson - as Marguerite in Faust, or again as Fenella in La Muette de Portici. In 1833, the two had appeared on the same evening at a benefit performance for the English actress, an occasion of bitter irony in which Marie Dorval's Adèle Hervey had eclipsed Harriet Smithson in the Ophelia scene from Hamlet.[84] Vigny sent a box to Berlioz and his wife for the opening night; Harriet Smithson could not bring herself to go to see Marie Dorval's success in the kind of role she herself had specialised in. Gautier's tribute, admittedly written long after the event - though the gap in time itself testifies to the definitive nature of the performance - conveys vividly the impression of Marie Dorval's style of acting; and his use of the adjective anglaise may be taken to refer both to the peculiarly English concept of Vigny's Kitty Bell, and to the modern, natural style which the actress had perfected:

> "Never again perhaps did this wonderful actress achieve such heights; what a gentle, English grace she employed! what a picture of motherhood she gave with the two babes, innocent go-betweens of an unspoken love! What sweet and womanly love she showed towards this boy of genius in rebellion against fate! With what a gentle touch she sought to heal the wounds of that injured pride!"[85]

Vigny was overwhelmed by the congratulations of his colleagues. George Sand, predictably, Sainte-Beuve, surprisingly, wept. Chatterton, however, was briskly removed from the repertory, and a classical tragedy substituted; and Vigny did not pursue his experiments with the Drame de la Pensée. The French Romantic dramatists, though infinitely more engaged with the realities of the theatre than their English contemporaries, experienced severe

difficulties in sustaining and developing the new dramaturgy which the theatrical context made possible.

CHAPTER 5 : NOTES

1. See Borgerhoff, Théâtre anglais à Paris, pp.229-33.
2. Journal d'Eugène Delacroix, ed. André Joubin. 3 vols. Paris, 1950. Vol.1, pp.59, 63, 79, 81.
3. Adolphe Moreau states that the lithograph was executed in 1828 from a water-colour done of one of the 1827 performances, but Lee Johnson dates it on stylistic grounds to 1824. See Lee Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, 1816-1831. 2 vols. Oxford, 1981. Vol.1, p.81.
4. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.119.
5. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.125.
6. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.149.
7. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.170.
8. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.233.
9. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.200.
10. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.114.
11. Magnin, Causeries, vol.2, p.196.
12. Delécluze, Journal, p.490.
13. See Maurice Descotes, Le Drame Romantique et ses grands créateurs (1826-1839). Paris, 1956.
14. J.T. Merle, De l'Opéra. Paris, 1827. p.35.
15. Joanny (Jean Baptiste Bernard Brissebarre), Journal, February 21st, 1829. Quoted in Descotes, Le Drame Romantique. See also M. Descotes, L'Acteur Joanny et son journal inédit. Paris, 1956.
16. Alexandre Dumas, Mes Mémoires, ed. P. Josserand. 6 vols. Paris, 1954. vol.3, p.18.
17. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.3, p.63.
18. Théophile Gautier, Histoire du Romantisme. Paris, 1874. p.5.
19. Albertin, Indications générales pour la mise en scène de Henri III et

sa Cour, ed. Marie-Antoinette Allevy. Paris, 1938.

20. La Quotidienne, February 13th, 1829.

21. The passage in Scott's The Abbot which relates to Dumas's play is as follows:

> "Beware, madam," said Lindesay, and, snatching hold of the Queen's arm, with his own gauntleted hand, he pressed it, in the rudeness of his passion, more closely, perhaps, than he was himself aware of, - "beware how you contend with those who are the stronger, and have the mastery of your fate!"
> .....
> The Queen immediately began, with an expression of pain, to bare the arm which he had grasped, by drawing up the sleeve of her gown, and it appeared that his gripe had left the purple marks of his iron fingers upon her flesh."

Walter Scott, The Waverley Novels, vol.9, ed. Andrew Lang. London, 1898. pp.350-1.

22. Joanny, Journal, February 25th, 1829.

23. La Courrier des Théâtres, February 12th, 1829.

24. Comtesse Dash, (A.-G. de Cisternes de Coutiras, Vicomtesse de Poilloüe de Saint-Mars), Mémoires des autres. 6 vols. Paris, 1896-8. Vol.3, p.109.

25. Le Journal des Débats, October 5th, 1824.

26. Casimir Delavigne, Oeuvres Complètes. 6 vols. Paris, 1852. Introduction to Marino Faliero, vol.2, p.137.

27. Delavigne, Oeuvres Complètes, vol.2, p.207.

28. Delavigne, Oeuvres Complètes, vol.2, p.138.

29. Delavigne, Oeuvres Complètes, vol.2, p.279.

30. Suddaby and Yarrow (eds.), Lady Morgan in France, p.95, note.

31. See Robert Baldick, The Life and Times of Frédérick Lemaître, pp.65-7.

32. Le Courrier des Théâtres, June 1st, 1829.

33. Maurice Descotes, Le Public de théâtre et son histoire. Paris, 1964, p.259.

34. Descotes, Le Public de théâtre et son histoire, p.264.

35. Gautier, Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans. Vol.2, p.45. Delacroix provides an additional link between Byron and Delavigne. His painting The Execution of the Doge Marino Faliero was exhibited in Paris in May, 1826, accompanied by an exceptionally detailed description by the artist: "Le Doge de Venise Marino Faliero, ayant, à l'âge de plus de 80 ans, conspiré contre la république, avait été condamné à mort par le Sénat. Conduit sur l'escalier de pierre où les doges prêtaient serment avant d'entrer en charge, on lui trancha la tête, après l'avoir dépouillé du bonnet de doge et du manteau ducal. Un membre de conseil des Dix prit l'épée qui avait servi à l'exécution, et dit en l'élevant en l'air: la justice a puni le traître. Aussitôt après la mort du doge, les portes avaient été ouvertes, et le peuple s'était précipité pour contempler le corps de l'infortuné Marino Faliero. (Voir la tragédie de Lord Byron.)" Lee Johnson comments that, in preliminary studies, Delacroix placed the corpse at the top of the staircase. In the finished work, the Doge's body is sprawled near the plebeians, separated from the patricians by the flight of bare steps. Louis Vitet, in a review in the Globe (June 3rd, 1826) complained that Delacroix had sacrificed "L'art à la réalité, au lieu de la sacrifier à l'idéal" - "Il est des degrés intermédiaires entre le type d'Adonis et celui de l'Orang Outang." See Lee Johnson, The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix, vol.1, pp.98-102.

36. Le Courrier Français, September 20th, 1827.

37. Le Journal des Débats, September 27th, 1827.

38. Delacroix, letter to Victor Hugo, 'ce mercredi' 1827. Correspondance Générale, vol.1, p.198.

39. Alfred de Vigny, letter to Pauthier, May 17th, 1828, in Alfred de Vigny, la vie littéraire, politique et religieuse, ed. L. Séché.

2 vols. Paris, 1913. Vol.1, p.376.

40. *Le* Globe, July 23rd, 1828.

41. Descotes, *Le* Drame romantique, p.114, citing Archives Nationales, O3.1629.

42. Vigny, letter to Baron Taylor, August, 1829, in Alfred de Vigny, Correspondance, Paris, 1933, p.192.

43. Léon Halévy, Le Théâtre-Français, épître à M. le Baron Taylor. Paris, 1828, p.18.

44. Charles H. Shattuck, ed., John Philip Kemble Promptbooks, vol.7.

45. Alfred de Vigny, Journal d'un Poète. Paris, 1935, p.67.

46. Vigny, letter to La Rounat, May 3rd, 1862, quoted in Oeuvres Complètes de Alfred de Vigny, Théâtre, vol.1, ed. F. Baldensperger, p.289.

47. *Le* Figaro, October 26th, 1829.

48. *Le* Courrier des Théâtres, October 26th, 1829.

49. *Le* Globe, October 28th, 1829.

50. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.3, pp.196-8.

51. Juste Olivier, Paris en 1830, ed. A. Delattre and M. Denkinger. Chapel Hill, 1951, p.201.

52. Olivier, Paris en 1830, p.202.

53. Joanny, Journal, March, 1830.

54. *Le* Corsaire, March 1st, 1830.

55. *Le* Courrier des Théâtres, February 28th, 1830.

56. André Pavie, Médaillons romantiques, Paris, 1909. p.117.

57. Victor Hugo, Préface de Cromwell, in Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Jean Massin. 18 vols. Paris, 1967-70. Vol.3, p.60.

58. Jean Massin, introduction to Hernani, Hugo, Oeuvres Complètes, vol.3, p.899.

59. Allevy, La mise en scène en France, p.60, quoting Solomé's livret of the mise en scène de La Muette de Portici. Pueckler-Muskau's

comments testify to the quality of the production. "It combines nearly all that one can desire in a theatre; - the good singing and acting I have mentioned, with magnificent decorations, and the best ballet in the world. If the text of the operas were fine poetry, I know not what further could be wished; but even as they are, one may be very well content; for instance, with the Muette de Portici which I saw today. Mademoiselle Noblet's acting is full of grace and animation, without the least exaggeration....The costumes were models; but Vesuvius did not explode and flame properly, and the clouds of smoke which sunk into the earth instead of ascending from it, were a phenomenon which I had not the good fortune to witness when I 'assistai' at a real eruption of that mountain." It is interesting that Pueckler-Muskau compares the stage imitation with the real eruption, implying at least that it should be possible to recreate the experience of the real. Tour in England, Ireland, and France, 1828 and 1829, vol.2, p.261.

60. Le Figaro, December 6th, 1830.

61. Gautier, Histoire de l'art dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans. Vol.1, p.50.

62. Le Corsaire, August 17th, 1830.

63. Le Figaro, August 14th, 1830.

64. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.4, p.141.

65. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.4, p.293.

66. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.4, p.296.

67. Eugène de Mirecourt, Bocage, Paris, 1856. p.59.

68. Le Figaro, May 4th, 1831.

69. Dumas, Mémoires. Quoted from the selection translated and edited by A. Craig Bell, London, 1961. p.216.

70. Dumas, Mémoires, vol.5, p.16.

71. Ernest Legouvé, Soixante ans de souvenirs, vol.2, p.32.

72. See the critical edition by Liano Petroni. Bologna, 1962. p.67.

73. Vigny, Chatterton, ed. Petroni, p.171.

74. Vigny, letter of March 4th, 1835, in Correspondance, 1816-1835. Oeuvres Complètes de Alfred de Vigny, ed. F. Baldensperger.

75. Charles Séchan, Souvenirs d'un homme du théâtre: 1831-1855. Paris, 1883. pp.240-1.

76. Alfred de Vigny, Stello, translated by Irving Massey. Montreal, 1963. p.62.

77. Emile Zola, 'Le Naturalisme au théâtre'. Collection des Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Maurice Le Blond. 50 vols. Paris, 1927-9. Vol.42, p.305.

78. Vigny, Chatterton, ed. Petroni, p.58.

79. W.D. Howarth, Sublime and Grotesque, London, 1975. p.269.

80. Le Constitutionnel, April 28th, 1834.

81. L'Artiste, 1835, No.IX, p.35.

82. Le Courrier des théâtres, February 13th, 1835.

83. Descotes, Le Drame Romantique, p.276.

84. The Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns, pp.267-9.

85. Gautier, Histoire du Romantisme, p.161. Notice on a revival of Chatterton from Le Moniteur, December 14th, 1857.

Chapter 6

THE FRENCH THEATRE IN LONDON, AND ITS INFLUENCE

The handful of 'serious' English theatre seasons in Paris - notably the 1822 débacle, the Romantic triumph of 1827-28, and the Macready/Helen Faucit appearances in the winter of 1844-45 - are well-documented, receiving close critical attention at the time and extensive retrospective commentary.[1] These visits were supplemented by a steady trickle of other, usually less intellectual, entertainers, of whom T.P. Cooke as Frankenstein might be selected as representative: Merle, the director of the Porte-Saint-Martin, adapted the monster into a 'personnage muet', so that Cooke's contribution was restricted to the art of mime. The language barrier was a formidable one for English actors to overcome, and the French appetite for drama in English was strictly limited (chiefly to some key works of Shakespeare) and rapidly satisfied. William Abbott was one of the few English actors to appear in a French play, conveniently in the character of an Englishman in Anglais et Français, a short farce by Bayard and Wailly (October, 1827). Bizarre contortions of convention were endured to create roles which Harriet Smithson could accomplish: as Cécilia in L'Auberge d'Auray, a comic opera by Moreau and d'Epagny with music by Carafa and Hérold, she was required to speak English while all remaining dialogue, spoken and sung, was in French; in October, 1834, she played the part of the condemned man's wife in a tragic one-act mime by Henry, La Dernière Heure d'un Condamné. But these performances were exceptions and novelties. The impact of the 1827-28 season was intense, and far-reaching in its influence; but that influence was subsumed within the development of French theatre. No enduring taste for English drama or theatre on the part of the French was established.

The incidence of French theatre in London in the post-war period was

far more substantial. For a number of reasons, it has not received the same scrutiny as the Théâtre Anglais, but there is evidence to suggest that the French contribution to the development of English acting style was at least of comparable weight as the reverse influence. There was a lengthy tradition behind visits of French companies, of which controversy formed a part. During the eighteenth century, for example, there were appearances by a French company at the Little Haymarket (October 9th, 1738), when the actors were protected by files of grenadiers with fixed bayonets, and had to compete with choruses of the "Roast beef of old England"; another attempt in 1749 was greeted by a riot, and the refrain "We don't want French comedians"; 1755 saw the Chinese Festival riots at Drury Lane, with the same cause: French plays and acting were attractive to the aristocracy, and anathema to the mass of the people and to English actors. These sporadic attempts were interrupted by periods of hostility such as the War of Austrian Succession, the Seven Years War, the War of American Independence. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars simply meant a much longer and more traumatic break.[2]

The first post-war initiatives were tentative, and the managers were forced to run a tedious gauntlet of permissions, licences and more overt hostility. In 1822, a French company was refused permission to appear in a public theatre, although a season was eventually presented by subscription. (This rebuff was one of the causes for the unsympathetic reception of Penley's company in Paris later the same year.) In 1824, there were in fact two French companies operating in London simultaneously, one performing at the concert room attached to the King's Theatre in the Haymarket (the Italian Opera House), and one at the Tottenham street theatre, which formed the nucleus of a company which eventually made annual visits to London. Crabb Robinson attended performances on May 10th, May 12th, May 17th, May 21st, June 2nd, June 16th and June 30th; and in his

Reminiscences makes the following common but significant judgment about the nature of French comedy:

> "This spring, the French Comedian Perlet was in London an Actor whose characters were not so farcical or led to buffoonery, but low - he was a good mimick - All French comedy is delicate compared with the parallel characters on the English stage..."[3]

Robinson's pattern of theatre-going for this year is of interest: out of the sixteen visits he mentions, he went to Covent Garden and Drury Lane three times each, twice to the Lyceum, once to the Haymarket, against seven to the French theatre.

There was a further season in 1825, from 1827 each year until 1837, and frequently thereafter, quite apart from the visits of individual stars. In 1842, John Mitchell assumed the lesseeship of the St James' Theatre, which had already been host to the French company on several occasions: the letter-head announced, "Théâtre Français, King Street, St James's, à Londres", and that season, the first of many, ran from February 7th to July 8th. During the nadir of the ex-patent theatres in the mid 1840s, it was as easy for a Londoner to see a refined comedy in French as to find one in English. The largely aristocratic audience must have contained a high proportion who understood French well. However, language difficulties were generally ignored. Crabb Robinson, a regular attender, occasionally comments that he did not understand what the actors were saying; but this he never judged to be a bar to appreciation. The audience for the Italian (or, later, German) opera was drawn from the same constituency; the language in which a particular opera was performed was seldom regarded as significant.

From an earlier period, the 1828 season, when the French company transferred to the larger and better equipped Lyceum theatre (the English Opera House), may be taken as typical. The season ran from January 16th until June 20th, with performances normally taking place twice a week, on

Mondays and Thursdays. The Playbills were printed in French, and announced "Soirées Françaises, par Souscription"; it was possible to book boxes for the season, for all the performances of a particular actor, or by the evening, but all reservations had to be made in advance: no money could be taken at the door, by the terms of the Lord Chamberlain's licence.[4] By April 16th, the frequency of performances was increased to three nights a week. The repertory consisted of comedies and vaudevilles; three or four were presented each evening, the most regular pieces being the comedies of Molière and the vaudevilles of Scribe. During this season Perlet appeared in Tartuffe, L'Ecole des Vieillards, L'Avare and Le Misanthrope; the other principal attraction was Jenny Vertpré, who was seen in two of her best-known roles, Minette in Scribe's La Chatte Metamorphosée en Femme (later transformed into a ballet for Fanny Ellsler), and Annette in La Pie Voleuse (by Caigniez), a part she had created in 1815.

The establishment of French theatre as a regular and, in the course of time, a central element within the London theatrical scene was accomplished in the face of understandable opposition, at a period when at least Drury Lane and Covent Garden were consistently losing money. Before the 1824 season the Theatrical Observer printed this report "From a Correspondent":

> "A report is prevalent that it is the intention to open the Concert-room at the Opera-house, for the purpose of performing French plays: it may be right that the public should be aware,that a licence for that purpose has been refused by the Lord Chamberlain, and that the parties present at such performances, upon information being lodged at one of the public-offices, are liable to imprisonment and the penalties of the tread-mill."[5]

These threats had little effect, as John Bull commented:

> "The French plays are in high force...in spite of the fulminations of newspaper correspondents against such horrible outrages, and in defiance of the tread-mill

> with which some anonymous worthies, evidently connected with the London play-houses, have threatened their hardy frequenters."[6]

Yet the same brand of chauvinism which had erupted at the Porte-Saint-Martin in 1822 was shown to be near the surface in England, when the same John Bull castigated Talma, who it was rumoured was considering an engagement at Covent Garden, for having been a supporter of Napoleon:

> "If Monsieur Talma acts French tragedy here, he will be hissed - if he acts English tragedy, he will be laughed at."[7]

Towards the end of the decade, however, this kind of prickliness becomes somewhat rarer, breaking out again only in such admittedly sensitive situations as the assumption of the Covent Garden management by a Frenchman, or the virtual dismissal of the English orchestra at the King's Theatre. Occasionally, the officiousness of the English theatre managers worked against their own interests. Morris of the Haymarket Theatre prosecuted Chedel, who was presenting French plays twice a week at the West London (Tottenham Street) theatre: Morris sent Farren along to buy a ticket at the door against the terms of the licence, and Chedel was fined fifty pounds. As the Spectator remarked,

> "The performances were little known; the manager apparently had not learnt the art of advertising, or was unacquainted with the channels of puffery; and the audiences were almost exclusively French, - people who, were their theatre shut tomorrow, would scarcely be tempted to enter Mr Morris's, to see their favourite pieces mangled and distorted in an English translation....The Frenchman, in an excess of hand-bills and paste, appeals to the sympathies of a British public; and next night his house, from being half filled, is overflowing with the good-humoured of both nations...we are ashamed of Mr Morris. We know no man more indebted to the French theatre than he is: he has borrowed, begged, and stolen from it: he and his company have lived upon it; what successful piece has he produced that has not been a translation from the French?"[8]

Yet the French theatre could still be blamed for a situation which had been increasingly obvious since the retirement of J.P. Kemble:

> "I have lately beheld with regret and astonishment, the triumphal success of the French Theatre in this city, and the result which has attended foreign importations. Our own Theatres, where the genius of Shakespeare is still preserved, and ought to triumph, are nearly deserted for French plays and Foreign Operas....and, to the disgrace of England, our nobility are nightly seen crowding to the French Theatre, while our own are comparatively neglected."[9]

Fashionable society had long ceased to be regular attenders at Drury Lane and Covent Garden; neither the repertory nor the company was to its taste. But at performances of Italian opera and French ballet at the King's Theatre, and of French plays at the Lyceum, the nobility could be certain that nothing disgusting would take place to offend them either on stage or in the auditorium. A comment to the effect that "A most fashionable company attended the French performances"[10] is relatively commonplace among critical notices. In addition, the very persistence of the managers is evidence of the Théâtre Français's popularity; they were not deterred even by losing several thousand pounds in the fire which destroyed the Lyceum on February 16th, 1830.

At the Lyceum in June, 1828, the French season was succeeded by the English company on June 30th, though the influence of the former still lingered in the decision to revive The Maid and the Magpie, so that audiences could compare Fanny Kelly's Annette to that of Jenny Vertpré. Meanwhile, Laporte announced that Mlle Mars would give six performances at the King's Theatre, beginning on Monday, June 23rd with Mars as Hortense in L'Ecole des Viellards and as the eponymous heroine in Scribe's Valérie, supported by Armand as the Duc d'Elmar. The Theatrical Observer reported a string of duchesses in the audience, but, more significantly, actors and actresses such as Madame Pasta, Young, Mr and Mrs Charles Kemble.[11] The kind of evening Laporte could arrange for his benefit on July 3rd indicates the quality of the opposition to English theatre: Sontag as Ninetta in Act One of La Gazza Ladra (a surfeit of magpies this summer);

himself with Mars and Armand in Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard; and Pasta in an Act of Sémiramide.

The French company from the Lyceum travelled north to Edinburgh for an autumn season, while the West London Theatre, Tottenham street, reopened on September 4th, with Frédérick Lemaître as Georges du Germany as the first attraction. The 1829 French season began at the Lyceum on January 5th, and lasted until June 19th, this year with three performances a week, a forty evening subscription on Mondays and Fridays, and a twenty evening one on Wednesdays. The company was correspondingly larger, comprising a regular nucleus which included Cloup, Pelissié (the managers) and Laporte, and substantial numbers of performances from Perlet, Lafont, Jenny Vertpré and Jenny Colon.

Mars, Perlet, Lemaître, Laporte, Vertpré and Colon constitute an impressive range of comedy specialists upon whom the English could base their judgements of French acting. Mars, it is true, was towards the close of her career. As Robinson remarked, "Mlle Mars is no longer fit for the Soubrette if she ever were - She wants youth and vivacity and she has too much dignity - Still her grace and fine delivery are very gratifying -"[12] this was of Susanne in Le mariage de Figaro. This residual restraint is referred to obliquely by the Examiner in a review of the same performance by means of a quotation from Hazlitt: "There is still a pettiness, an attention to minutiae, an etiquette, a mannerism about her acting: she does not give an entire loose to her feelings, or trust to the unpremeditated and habitual impulse of her situation. She has greater elegance, perhaps, and precision of style, than Madame Pasta, but not half her boldness or grace."[13] It is necessary to recall that Mlle Mars had not yet encountered the romantic drama of Dumas, Vigny and Hugo, in which she clearly learned to "loose" her feelings by some degrees. Nevertheless, the Examiner credited her with a far greater freedom from "consciousness"

than English actors - consciousness, that is, of the presence of the audience. As evidence, the critic noted that "The other night...the Page's cloak had 'sprung' its shoulder-button, and Mlle Mars fastened it with a pin, the dialogue proceeding uninterruptedly as if it had been in a private room." In contrast, the English performers are for ever "bowing when they come in, bowing when they go out, bowing at an encore, bowing at a little extra applause, there is a constant interchange of amenities kept up to the dispelling of the dramatic illusion". That comparison "as if it had been in a private room" echoes the comments by Delécluze about the movement patterns and dramatic illusion of the English tragic actors in Romeo and Juliet. The shared ideal is a style which transforms imitation into nature; as the Theatrical Observer wrote of Armand's "elegant deportment and unequalled grace", "the scenes between him and Mars, were not acting, but reality".[14]

The Spectator, in reviewing Mars, sought to define the contrasting qualities of French and English comedy. "A quiet deportment, ordinary tones, and moderate play of features are characteristic of the French Comedy, and become its vein of delicate wit, just as a little exaggeration and a slight touch of extravagance suit the broad humour of our own." (This judgement can probably be applied both to English comedy per se, and to English versions of contemporary French comedy, which were habitually broadened in adaptation.) Again, the domestic drawing-room is put forward as the standard of comparison - Mlle Mars would have won no grace in the eyes of Fielding's Partridge - "the pink lady, with the long train, would have been pronounced the better actress, on the ground that she obviously was acting." Both the Theatrical Observer and the Spectator commended "the grace, ease and elegance" of Mars to the acting profession. "We were glad to see some of the Haymarket people at the Opera that night. They had an opportunity of discovering that there is not necessarily one

rule for talking and moving on the stage, and another for the drawingroom, that no more is required of the legs and arms in the one than in the other, and that the best way to give effect to a happy or characteristic speech, is to speak it naturally, and leave it to find its own way, unenforced by emphasis and grimace. They cannot be divinities like Mars, it is true; but they may be men and women - not caricatures of men and women."[15]

As often occurred, a production in French encouraged an English adaptation, and Mars' appearance in Scribe's Valérie was shortly followed by that of Fanny Kelly in Valeria, a "mongrel piece" "spoiled for the English stage from the beautiful drama of Scribe".[16] The burden of the Spectator's criticism, which credits Miss Kelly with being "the only actress on the English stage that could come within a hundred miles of Valérie", is that her undoubted pathos was generalised; it was "affecting, without being particularly characteristic of her condition; and sometimes she was as one that talked with her eyes shut rather than the born blind." "She closed her eyes, and people talked of her blindness; but you did not read her lot in the indescribable tokens of her accent and manner." Mars, in contrast, chose to represent blindness by the "dull, dead gaze which indicates it when (the eyelids) are open". Other strictures refer to the adaptation: the "respectable old serving-man" who conducts Valérie on to the stage in the original was transformed into a "gossiping chambermaid"; while the amours of Henri and Caroline, subsidiary in Scribe, are promoted to the foreground - both changes, and other similar touches, make the play broader, and less "serious", affecting and sentimental. Mars had the advantage of Miss Kelly, too, in the style of acting of the supporting cast, "not being surrounded by grimacing, ranting Thespians...but by persons who at least comported themselves quietly and looked like ladies and gentlemen". Finally, two points of staging and business emphasise the dislike of the fastidious for the more blatant devices of the theatre,

which the Spectator considered pushed the play "within a perilous distance of the burlesque". "Let Valérie or Valeria before the next performance, entreat Mr Vining to dispense with the everlasting two chairs, and not to insist on their sitting Darby and Joan like whilst Valérie relates her story. Abcve all, let her forbid Lord Melsom's chasing her with the green shade. It is a mortal foe to sentiment: the very sight of it made you shudder, and a single demonstration more on the part of Mr Cooper towards putting it on Valérie must have wrecked the whole piece." What can be sensed throughout these comments is a dislike for the broad, the obvious, the conventionally theatrical,the caricature (to use pejorative terms) - and, perhaps, the vigorous; and an inclination towards the particular, the subtle, the natural, towards detailed and internalised characterisation, above all a process of refinement which placed, at its centre, the ideal of an actor identified with his part.

That Mars was not considered an isolated example of such an ideal is readily demonstrated. Perlet, the most frequent visitor to the French company, is praised again and again as "a perfect specimen of the natural as founded on the appropriate. We never saw the performer who so completely identified himself with the character, and abstracted himself from the audience, as does M. Perlet. He seems to live but in the immediate business of the scene; and the first impression produced by his matchless acting is, that it is not acting at all: it is so quiet, easy, and just level to the occasions of the scene. A term in slang use indicates a fault on our own stage the opposite to the excellence we have endeavoured to describe: great reliance is laid by our comedians on hits. Now Perlet makes no hits; he never throws himself out on the audience, or grasps at attention and applause....The temptation to a single clap would spoil the praise of it...every beauty naturally proceeds from 'the excellence of the general conception'."[17] To some extent, arguably, the

style of acting that "is not acting","quiet, easy, and just level to the occasions of the scene" springs from the French style of comedy, Molière rather than Jonson; but it must also be a part of the theatrical context of the audience/stage relationship. "Quiet and easy" acting is hard to conceive of in Drury Lane or Covent Garden, at least before the reforms of Macready and Charles Kean; and the precarious and competitive theatrical ambiance encouraged demonstrative contacts between performer and paying public, so that a performance (both individual and of a play) was in danger of degenerating into a series of isolated turns, rather than achieving any unity of design.

The "proteus-like"[18] faculty of Perlet was noted also in the acting of Hugues-Désirée Bouffé, who gave twelve appearances during the 1831 season. "He possesses that quality of identifying himself with the characters he represents, which is the first and, be it added, the rarest of the actor's accomplishments. The crying fault of the very best actors our stage can boast - and the range is not a very extensive one - is, that they are the same in all they do. The identical manner mixes itself up in whatever they undertake. The same set of gestures, the same tone of voice, the same habits, - every thing in short, but their dresses, are strongly marked in every part they fill."[19] Again, the criticisms of the actors are linked with the kind of drama provided for them; and the paucity, and poor quality, of new English drama of every kind is a perpetual complaint in the commentaries of the time: "...the whole round of farces (comedy we have none, nor are likely to have) consist of characters just as closely resembling each other as those of the pantomimes." From these reflections on the French actors can be drawn two opposing concepts of acting: the one restrained, natural, domestic, unified, constructed upon a multiplicity of detail; the other vigorous, theatrical, extravagant, built around a number of striking and bold effects. The first seems suitable for comedy, for

dramas of contemporary life; the other for farce, for melodrama. For tragedy, it was necessary to evolve some kind of compromise.

One French actor who exercised a remarkable and pervasive influence upon English theatrical taste was Pierre François Laporte. Laporte appeared in the early seasons of French theatre at the West London, Tottenham street. In 1826-27 he was engaged at Drury Lane, acting first as Sosia in Amphitryon on November 18th, 1826. Crabb Robinson commented: "His foreign accent was apparent enough but that rather added to the pleasantry. The most applauded passages were those in which the Frenchman was most apparent."[20] On January 23rd, he acted Holdfast, a bailiff, in My Best Friend or £277-7s-7d, a play taken from the French. The Theatrical Observer reported: "Laporte, on whom the main burden rested, not only successfully assumed the language and manner of a Bailiff with astonishing correctness, but gave even the nicety of slang which distinguishes these gentlemen with the most extraordinary truth and fidelity";[21] and the next issue went even further by suggesting that although Liston had acted Lubin Log previously in the same bill, "the comparison did not injure the effect of Laporte's excellent portrait".[22] Laporte then went on tour to Brighton, and Dublin, before returning to Drury Lane to appear as Wormwood, a lawyer's clerk, in The Lottery Ticket, and Spruce, an intriguing servant, in The Two Make a Pair (adapted by Raymond from the French). He was granted a benefit on April 27th when he acted La Nippe in Lord of the Manor and was "much applauded throughout the evening, this is said to be his last appearance, but we trust this only means for the present."[23]

Laporte was surprisingly popular: he also acted Blaisot opposite Miss Kelly in The Magpie for her benefit on May 23rd. He was then engaged for the summer season at the Haymarket and was seen in some eight different roles, including Figaro in The Marriage of Figaro. "He made his bow to the Haymarket audience in a one-act farce I adapted for

him, from a French vaudeville he selected for the purpose, on the 15th June, 1827, and I then wrote the operatic comedy called 'The Rencontre'."[24]

Laporte was a highly versatile actor, with a wide range of comedy roles, and an ability to sing, to dance, and indeed to impersonate female characters as well.

It has already been mentioned that Laporte appeared frequently with the French companies, both at the West London and Lyceum theatres. From 1828-41, with the exception of 1832, he virtually controlled the productions at the King's Theatre, the Italian Opera House, though his precise financial involvement varied during the period. From March, 1832, for almost a year, he was, remarkably, the manager of Covent Garden, a circumstance which many took to represent the nadir of the English theatre's fortunes. Since his tenure was relatively brief, it may conveniently be described first. After Charles Kemble's efforts to sustain Covent Garden failed, it fell, in the ungrateful words of the New Monthly Magazine,"into the hands of a foreign adventurer, to be made into a 'Cirque Olympique', 'Salle d'Opera', a 'Theatre Francais', or any thing else that may best suit the Entrepreneur; any thing, in fact, except a theatre for the legitimate performance of the legitimate English Drama."[25] Although, in the longer term, that prophecy about a "Salle d'Opera" would be fulfilled, Laporte's first move was to present a limited season featuring Mlle Mars and Marie Taglioni, which even the New Monthly Magazine admitted was a brilliant success. It proved that there was an audience for well-conducted dramatic performances, so long as the "higher classes" could attend "without compromising, in their own persons, that outward decency and decorum to which they pay such fastidious attention". The performances of Mars and Taglioni were "too refined to attract gallery company"; as a consequence, "the boxes and the orchestra are crowded every night with a brilliant assemblage of company, three-fourths of which consist of women

of rank and fashion; and the pit is filled with the élite of the respectable portion of middle life." Later in the article the writer instances Matthews' performances as attracting audiences of the upper and respectable classes, because he so "scrupulously avoided any offence to public decency" and abstained from "appealing to gallery applause"; the theatre in the Strand, the Lyceum, "is filled nightly with a respectable and attentive audience" - because it has no gallery. Otherwise, "the upper classes are to be found consistently only at the King's Theatre and the French plays".[26]

But Laporte, while able to fill Covent Garden with select performances of French drama and ballet, had no better fortune than his predecessors, or immediate successors, in making the legitimate drama pay its way. Indeed, the inherited structure and expectations, and the enormous weekly wage bill, probably doomed any programme to failure. The workmanlike cobblings of Planché and Douglas Jerrold proved insipid attractions. The acting company was poor: Kean, whose powers were failing, was at Drury Lane, as was Macready; Charles Kemble was in America with his daughter Fanny; Young had retired. On March 25th, 1833, Edmund Kean was announced to play Othello opposite his son Charles as Iago: it was a desperate measure - "mere quackery" according to Macready. Kean collapsed unconscious in Act Three (he died, aged forty-six, on May 15th). Laporte had had enough. A production of The Wife, by Sheridan Knowles, was presented, Knowles being one of the few British dramatic authors of solid reputation; but the acting company could not agree terms with Laporte for the rent of the theatre, and took themselves off to the Olympic. The lesseeship passed to Bunn. One of the few successes of this financially disastrous venture was a ballet of "Masaniello", evidence tending to support fears such as that of the Court Magazine: "we must raise our voices against either of our national theatres being turned into a mere academie

de danse, to gratify the personal interests of a rapacious foreigner..."[27] Bunn paid tacit acknowledgement to the logic of Laporte's policy by transferring Malibran from Drury Lane, presenting Madame Schroeder Devrient in Fidelio, and introducing Madame Vestris as Masaniello.

Laporte's most long-standing contribution to the development of English theatre was as manager of the King's Theatre. He inherited a tradition of high quality from John Ebers, who was in charge for most of the period from 1820 to 1827 and who ensured a predominantly French orientation for the bulk of the productions. As early as 1816 it had been noted that ballet, at any rate, had "reached an extraordinary pitch of elegance and maturity for the meridian of London".[28] A decline set in from 1817 to 1820, when a series of second-rate choreographers was employed; but Ebers revived the practice of engaging the best Parisian dancers and choreographers, and the season of 1821 featured Lise Noblet (as Nina), and both M. Albert and M. Paul. Ebers made an agreement with the Académie Royale de Musique and the Opéra Italien to engage both leading and supporting artists for specific periods, and the arrangement was continued regularly, so that London saw all the premier French and Italian dancers of the period (in the 1830s, under Laporte, Elssler, Cerrito and Carlotta Grisi made their London débuts before appearing in Paris). Another tradition which Ebers established was to emphasise the mise en scène. He engaged Signor Zara, a pupil of Ciceri, in 1821 as his principal scene-painter, and gradually improved the standard of both sets and costumes. The reform was necessary; "the eye was wearied and the imagination was disgusted by seeing different countries and ages exhibiting the same scenes and costumes".[29] Ebers, like Laporte his successor, tended to favour the ballet at the expense of the opera: by his own account he spent £10678 on ballet against £8636 on opera for the successful 1821 season. He also established a long tradition of losing money, £7000 that year, and

£44000 during his tenure.

Laporte assumed the lesseeship of the King's Theatre in 1828, at first jointly with M. Laurent (who was currently presenting the Théâtre Anglais in Paris, and afterwards took charge of the Théâtre Italien), and later in his own right. Apart from 1832, when Monck Mason assumed control (and lost a fortune), and a period during 1835 when the lease was nominally transferred to Laporte's father while he himself passed through the bankruptcy court, this commitment was maintained until after the 1841 season, when he died. Laporte suffered bitter, public controversy at the start and close of his association. During the winter of 1828-29 there was a lengthy disagreement between the orchestra and the management about the terms of the players' contracts; the 1840-41 period was marred by the Tamburini affair. Henry Chorley comments on the 1840 season that "the Opera management, which for a half-a-dozen years had gone from strength to strength, began to change its plans, and to show symptoms of uneasiness, decomposition, and pretext".[30] In the intervening period, Laporte presented the greatest singers and dancers of the continent, consolidated the position of the King's Theatre as the most fashionable house in London, and was responsible for the production of a number of important new works.

In opera, the decade saw the replacement of Rossini as leading composer by Bellini, first, and later Donizetti. New works given their English premières at the King's included Il Pirata (1830), La Sonnambula (1831), Norma and I Montecchi (1833), I Puritani (1835), and Beatrice di Tenda (1836), by Bellini; and Anna Bolena (1831), Marino Faliero (1835), L'Elisir d'Amore and Belisario (1837), Lucia di Lammermoor (1838) and Lucrezia Borgia (1839) of Donizetti. Singers included Malibran, Pasta, Cinti-Damoreau, Giulia Grisi, Schroeder-Devrient, Sontag, Persiani, Paula Garcia, Lablache, Nourrit, Tamburini, Rubini, Ivanoff, Mario. Under Michael Costa, whom Laporte engaged in 1830 as répétiteur, and who

developed into an accomplished conductor and trainer, the standard of both orchestra and chorus improved steadily; while the appointment of William Grieve to oversee the scene-painting in 1829 (a post he held simultaneously with his commitment to Covent Garden) ensured the general high quality of the décor.

In spite of the introduction of so many new operas, and the availability of singers of such high quality, it was in ballet that Laporte achieved the most consistent success. This was in part because of the arrival of a succession of outstanding dancers. Jules Perrot appeared in 1830, though arguably he became more influential as a choreographer in the 1840s. The other great dancers were ballerinas, notably Marie Taglioni (1830), Fanny Elssler (1833), Carlotta Grisi (1836) and Fanny Cerrito (1840). Frequently these dancers were presented in works created earlier in Paris - as, for example, Taglioni in La Sylphide, first seen at Covent Garden during Laporte's management (July 26th, 1832) with Laporte himself dancing the role of the sorceress Madge; or Elssler in La Gipsy (1839). But a significant number of the ballets were created for London, with Deshayes responsible for Masaniello (1829), Kenilworth (1831), Faust (1833), Beniowsky (1836) and Le Brigand de Terracina (1837). Masaniello was especially popular, being revived each year until 1834, and repeated again in 1838.[31]

The story of Masaniello was staged in London in a variety of adaptations, some referred to as operas (the Scribe/Auber prototype), some as ballets, but most were a blend of singing and dancing with the addition of scenes of dramatic action, both spoken and mimed. The Deshayes ballet version was clearly one of the most unified productions of its time. The Spectator reviewed the work in some detail without mentioning the names of the principal dancers, who were Pauline Leroux as Fenella and Coulon as Masaniello. For the Spectator it was "the most splendid ballet we ever

beheld; and in this country at least, it is as original in its style as unrivalled in execution....In the management of the spectâcle, a genius (for it merits the word) is displayed, of which we were never before made sensible. The costumes are many of them beautiful, and their contrasts have been managed with the happiest judgment. Many of the scenes present groups and effects of colour which must feast the eye of a painter. Music, motion, colouring, all are in admirable keeping, and leave the most fastidious critic nothing to desire. This excellence is especially conspicuous in Masaniello, that no one is a mere figure in the scene. The humblest performer in the corps de ballet has something to contribute to the general effect, by action or expression; and the result is an animation and bustle which have the stirring character of real life."[32] The same qualities were emphasised by the Athenaeum - "Certainly nothing so splendid and yet so lively has come before us, in any dramatic shape, for years"; the review paid particular attention to the contribution of the corps de ballet: "a nameless crew of Lazzaroni, fishermen, conspirators, fruit-venders, and the like, whoever they were, displayed great skill in their subordinate capacities, looking roguish, or piscatorial, or sanguinary, or pastoral, as the case required; and yet after all, a mere ignobile vulgus, fellows who have, in all former ballets, hopped, skipped, and jumped, merely to give others leisure to recover breath." Pauline Leroux's performance was praised, but so strong was the sense of unity in the production that "we are almost tempted to admire the opening scene beyond all the others in which she is engaged, though she has no further duty in it to perform than to run here and there, for a minute, and then disappear."[33]

The contrast which these qualities - unity, appropriate characterization, the deployment and choreographing of the chorus and supernumeraries - made with current English theatre practice was underlined when Drury Lane followed the King's Theatre success with its own version,

featuring Braham as Masaniello. The Spectator prefaced its "odious comparison" with an anecdote about Garrick's reform of costume in Macbeth, when he exchanged his "little three-cornered hat bound with copper tinsel" for a Scotch bonnet, and everyone exclaimed about the extraordinary national exactness of the costume. But this antiquarian exactness seldom extended to the rest of the cast. "How often have we seen the Roman lictors in red stockings and yellow slippers! Parts are often precise in excellence, but the whole is seldom or never studied at our national theatre." In imitating the King's Theatre, Drury Lane was judged to have advanced about as far as Garrick: it had crowned Garrick's brigadier-general's uniform with the Scotch cap. "The effect of the tout ensemble" was still wanting; "The fishermen scattered about the stage, do not appear rough and careless like those at the Opera, but trim and genteel, as if they had...just won the Dogget coat and badge...and were decked in the prize jackets for the festivities of the Dog and Duck."[34]

The comment indicates the contemporary taste for the picturesque allied to convincing detail: verisimilitude required the chorus to look and behave like Neapolitan peasants and working fishermen, rather than Thames watermen on holiday. The accounts of the Masaniello ballet suggest the kind of total effect which Macready achieved in Coriolanus or King John ten years or so later, in which décor, costume, grouping, and imaginative use of the crowd contributed as much to the imaginative impact of a work as the brilliance of individual performances. The fact that these ballets were new works, rather than revivals, and that by their very nature they demanded the control of the choreographer, meant that they were "directed" in the modern sense in a way that was very rare in the routine-dominated stage management of the English theatres.

In other respects, too, Laporte briefly anticipated the reforms Macready would later strive to achieve at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

The more refined taste exemplified by Mlle Mars and Marie Taglioni, both in terms of a more natural style of acting and the appropriate dramatic context for it, attracted a more fastidious audience. But Covent Garden could never be transformed into a suitable venue for naturalistic drama; its dimensions inexorably thrust the repertory towards musical drama, opera or ballet, and towards spectacle. One unusual attempt to create a new kind of work, suitable for the vast auditorium but of serious, indeed religious intent, was the presentation in February 1833 of The Israelites in Egypt; or, The Passage of the Red Sea: An Oratorio, consisting of Sacred Music, Scenery, and Personation, The Music composed by Handel and Rossini. The Drama written, and the Music Adapted by M. Rophino Lacy. Special dispensation was obtained for this enactment of a religious subject, with the Bishop of London adding his approval to that of the Lord Chamberlain. The Grieves were entrusted with the pictorial conception, which has affinities, according to Meisel, both with Francis Danby's Delivery of Israel out of Egypt (1825), published in 1829 as an engraving as The Passage of the Red Sea, and Martin's mezzotint The Destruction of Pharaoh's Host (1833).[35] Opinions differed as to the efficacy, and the propriety, of the production. The Times account gives a detailed description of the final scene, and is interesting to set beside the accounts of, for instance, Stanfield's effects in Macready's Henry V.

> "The scenery, which is entirely new, is beautiful and striking, and the last scene most remarkably so. It represents the Israelites pursued by Pharaoh and his host, and saved from destruction by their miraculous passage through the Red Sea. The pursuers hang upon their rear, and push after them into the water. The waves then close up, the clouds descend, and the Egyptian army is ingulfed. After a few moments the clouds clear off, and the Israelites are discovered on the opposite bank, returning thanks to God whose power has rescued them, while the sea is strewn with the trophies of the discomfited host of their enemies. This is so well managed as to render it one of the most effective scenic representations we ever remember to have seen."[36]

This experiment of Laporte's appealed to his successor, Bunn, who began to prepare "another sacred subject, Jephtha's Vow, on precisely the same scale." However, a licence was refused, repetition of The Israelites in Egypt was prohibited, and indications given that any oratorio "to be represented in character and with scenery and decorations" would in future be banned.[37]

In the 1840s, the actress Rachel made a number of highly praised appearances in London. Her career at the Comédie Française, which began with Camille in Corneille's Horace in 1838, substantially assisted the revival of French classical drama and the corresponding decline of romantic drama. She made her début at the age of sixteen, and had only the briefest period of training at the Conservatoire, being privately coached by the actor Samson. Her other mentor was the critic Jules Janin, who by his enthusiastic articles in the Journal des Débats drew the public's attention to her. She was, above everything, a "natural", instinctive actress; and she had the rare ability of instilling a sense of the natural into the highly artificial conventions of French classical tragedy. "She was, of all those artists inspired by nature, the one who was the least qualified for her profession. So, the lessons of her coaches were all forgotten the first time she set foot in a proper theatre."[38] Like Marie Dorval, she was able to transmit in a simple and natural way the intensity of the emotions she was portraying. She owed something, too, to Harriet Smithson, according to Janin: "Before mademoiselle Rachel, it was the tragédien who was the absolute master of tragedy, and the tragediénne who, with us, inevitably played the secondary role...but Miss Smithson...went first, she heralded mademoiselle Rachel and, without realising it, prepared the way for her by acclimatising the French people to think in terms not just of tragédiens but of tragédiennes as well."[39]

(Fig. 55)
Rachel made her London début at Her Majesty's Theatre in May, 1841.

The impact which her acting made is all the more remarkable in view of the unmoveable British prejudice against Racine and Corneille - far more deep-rooted than the corresponding French disquiet about Shakespeare - and the indifferent acting which surrounded her - "the strolling-player mediocrity of the men and women who had to support the actress". Rachel's acting was essentially a solo performance:

> "The power she possesses of digging out the heart of passion from the old cumbrous forms under which Nature and Emotion were court-dressed (not destroyed) by the Corneilles and Racines, enables her so to animate her great scenes, that speech becomes action. The bowl and dagger are in her eye and on her tongue; and all the visible machinery of a catastrophe is felt as a poor, and coarse, and tawdry thing, compared with the mental intensity of scorn, torment, hatred, and despair, which she knows how to conjure up, by a few broken and concentrated tones - by a few impassioned gestures."[40]

Rachel's art was economical, controlled, and above all unified. This comment by the Examiner: "She holds continually within her heart the invisible central point of the character she personates, and what we observe of its most startling contrasts, fitful and various as they seem, are but converging or diverging rays"[41] is reminiscent of Hazlitt on John Philip Kemble. Her art, in fact, was independent of the dramatic and theatrical context, and Macready's illuminating assessment of it is included in the following chapter. Yet the style of her acting fits within a tradition exemplified by Harriet Smithson, Helen Faucit and Marie Dorval, by Talma, Macready and Lemaître: the search for the natural. The Examiner claimed that "The same harmony of art, pervaded every scene she appeared in".

> "With a faultless precision and even minuteness of detail, with an execution that never failed to realize its purpose and tell upon the house in every distinct effect, all was at the same time massed, combined, contrasted, with that quiet and unobtrusive power which belongs to the highest genius. Nothing was driven into heroics, nothing sank into hysterics. Informed with feeling, modulated and made musical by passion, the

> fine verses of the old French poet broke through all the formal restraints of his school, burst from their prison of measured pause and pointed antithesis, and, as they came from the mouth of this natural actress, swept into the broad, free path of nature."[42]

Elsewhere in the Haymarket could be seen the antithesis of Andromaque: the modern verisimilitude of Bulwer Lytton's Money.

CHAPTER 6 : NOTES

1. See Borgerhoff, Le Théâtre anglais à Paris, and Leathers, British Entertainers in France.
2. See Sybil Rosenfeld, "Foreign Theatrical Companies in Great Britain in the 17th and 18th Centuries". (Society for Theatre Research Pamphlet Series, 4.) London, 1955.
3. The London Theatre 1811-1866: Selections from the diary of Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Eluned Brown. London, 1966, p.109.
4. Information about the French seasons in London is drawn principally from the playbill collection, British Library; the Theatrical Observer; Bell's Weekly Messenger; and notices in John Bull, Examiner, and The Times.
5. Theatrical Observer, January 28th, 1824.
6. John Bull, February 1st, 1824, p.46.
7. John Bull, October 3rd, 1824, p.325.
8. Spectator, September 27th, 1828, p.201.
9. Theatrical Observer, February 13th, 1828.
10. Theatrical Observer, January 26th, 1828.
11. Theatrical Observer, June 24th, 1828.
12. The London Theatre 1811-1866, p.124.
13. Examiner, July 6th, 1828, p.436.
14. Theatrical Observer, June 24th, 1828.
15. Spectator, July 5th, 1828, p.8.
16. Spectator, September 20th, 1828, p.190.
17. Spectator, March 28th, 1829, p.201.
18. Spectator, April 4th, 1829, p.217.
19. The Times, February 12th, 1831.
20. The London Theatre 1811-1866, p.116.

21. Theatrical Observer, January 24th, 1827.

22. Theatrical Observer, January 25th, 1827.

23. Theatrical Observer, April 28th, 1827.

24. James Robinson Planché, Recollections and Reflections. 2 vols. London, 1872. Vol.1, p.120.

25. New Monthly Magazine, July 1st, 1832, p.303.

26. New Monthly Magazine, August 1st, 1832, p.304.

27. Court Magazine, August, 1832, p.264.

28. The Times, August 12th, 1816.

29. John Ebers, Seven Years of the King's Theatre. London, 1828. p.3 and following.

30. Henry F. Chorley, Thirty Years' Musical Recollections. 2 vols. London, 1862. Vol.1, p.16.

31. See Ivor Guest, Romantic Ballet in England, London, 1954, and Benjamin Lumley, Reminiscences of the Opera, London, 1864.

32. Spectator, April 4th, 1829, p.217.

33. Athenaeum, April 1st, 1829, p.206.

34. Spectator, May 9th, 1829, pp.295-6.

35. Martin Meisel, "The Material Sublime: John Martin, Byron, Turner, and the Theater" in Images of Romanticism, ed. K. Kroeber and W. Walling, p.217.

36. The Times, February 23rd, 1833.

37. See Alfred Bunn, The Stage: Both Before and Behind the Curtain. 2 vols. London, 1848. Vol.1, pp.134, 176-7.

38. Jules Janin, Rachel et la Tragédie. Paris, 1869. pp.65-6.

39. Janin, Rachel et la Tragédie, p.69.

40. Athenaeum, May 15th, 1841, p.390.

41. Examiner, May 16th, 1841, p.309.

42. Examiner, May 16th, 1841, p.310.

Chapter 7

MACREADY, VESTRIS, AND THE UNIFIED PRODUCTION

The strangle-hold exercised by the major theatres on the legitimate drama was not effectively broken until the Theatre Regulation Act was passed in 1843. Ironically, the preceding few years saw three managers in charge of London theatres who, in contrasting ways, demonstrated how the existing system might have been exploited for the general benefit and development of English drama. The first, and most influential, was Macready, who was manager at Covent Garden from September 1837 to July 1839, and at Drury Lane from October 1841 to June 1843. Madame Vestris succeeded Macready at Covent Garden, and survived for almost three seasons. The third manager was Benjamin Webster, who assumed control of the Haymarket in June, 1837; though Webster was not himself innovative, the smaller size of this theatre, and the reduced scale of its operation, made it a much less inflexible instrument than the other patent theatres, and a suitable context for the production of a modern comedy such as Bulwer's Money.

Macready, as his talent developed and his authority increased, began to exercise more and more control over the mise en scène of any play in which he appeared. This control became absolute during his periods of management at Covent Garden and Drury Lane; conversely, he was forced to suffer, not always in silence, at the hands of incompetent managers and third-rate companies in the course of his frequent tours. But whenever circumstances permitted, he sought to raise the quality of the overall interpretation. A comment from the Spectator about Macready's acting may be taken by extension as an indication of his approach to stage-presentation: "If we say that naturalness (an ugly but a useful word) is at the basis of all Mr Macready's impersonations, we do not conceive we shall

widely err. To seize on an emotion, to make it perfectly comprehensible to every capacity, to familiarise the creations of the dramatist to the spectator, rather than to hold them in a state of august elevation, seems to be his constant aim."[1]

That naturalness of emotion was conveyed in Macready's own acting sometimes by the restrained domestic touch, sometimes by an overwhelming outburst of passion: years after the opening of the Covent Garden season with The Winter's Tale (October 30th, 1837), Helen Faucit could recall her terror as Hermione in the face of Macready's rapturous kisses when Leontes sees the statue stir to life - she was only eighteen at the time.[2] Fanny Kemble, less impressionable, did not find Macready pleasant to act with. "He growls and prowls, and roams and foams about the stage, like a tiger in his cage, so that I never know what side of me he means to be"; having expected the worst as Desdemona, she imagined that as Lady Macbeth she would be immune, only to be "astonished and dismayed when, at the exclamation 'Bring forth men-children only', he seized me ferociously by the wrist and compelled me to make a demi-volte or pirouette such as I think that lady did surely never perform before."[3] Macready pinched her black and blue and almost tore the pointlace from her head. Samuel Phelps, condemned, as he thought, that same 1837 season to interminable repetitions of Macduff, recorded the occasion of the row he had with Macready during the fight with Macbeth.

> " 'Mac' let fly at me, nearly giving me a crack on the head, as he growled -
> 'D--n your eyes! take that!'
> For the moment I was flabbergasted, but when he returned to the charge I gave him a dose of his own physic (adding to the oath not only his eyes but his limbs too!). He returned the compliment by heaping maledictions on my seed, breed, and generation. Then he 'went' for me, and I 'went' for him, and there we were growling at each other like a pair of wild beasts, until I finished him, amidst a furore of applause.
> The audience were quite carried away by the 'cunning of the scene', and shouted themselves hoarse, roaring

> on the one side 'Well done, "Mac"!' on the other 'Let him have it, Phelps!'"[4]

This incident caused Macready much heart-searching. "I had drunk much wine, and was very vehement, swearing rather loudly (unwise, ungentlemanly and dangerous passion!) at Mr Phelps in the fight."[5] The next day, he had a long conversation with Phelps, "to whom I sent in order to excuse myself for my last night's violence. He did not take offence at it. I was very much to blame."[6] It is possible that feelings of vulnerability fuelled Macready's passion. However, these anecdotes are a useful corrective to the inference which might be drawn from accounts of Macready as stage-director, to the effect that the actor's passion and energy became mechanically subordinate to spectacle and mechanical staging. As an actor, he was always deeply absorbed by his role; hence these "Macready bursts". Yet more and more he studied a role within its complete dramatic context, and it was the "creations of the dramatist" which he strove to make "comprehensible to every capacity".

The first, and most accessible element, of production which received his attention was that of costume. When Macready appeared at Covent Garden early in his career he was content to note in his copy of the Henry V promptbook such miscellaneous items as "White Julians shirt" or "Large Hamlets mantle". Soon, however, he was to purchase his own costume for Virginius, "to be correct".[7] For the 1834 Drury Lane Sardanapalus, he despatched detailed instructions to Bunn from Dublin: "Having no opportunity of consulting authority, nor giving directions here, I am obliged to leave these matters to other tastes. I only beg I may not be bespangled. - White or light blue, or pink satin or silk, embroidered with dead gold braiding and jewels is the style of ornament. It should be noted, that mine should be the only long dress, particularly distinguished in that from all the other men in the play: the skirt or tunic nearly to the ancles, but open from the middle with trowsers underneath, similar to

those in Hope's Costume."[8] The reference to "consulting authority" aligns Macready with the general antiquarian tendency of his age - in respect to costume, John Kemble, and Planché, were acknowledged predecessors; the stress that "mine should be the only long dress" re-asserts the demands of the stage picture, even if at times his concerns seem, and certainly seemed to his fellow actors, to centre too firmly upon maintaining his own pre-eminence. Macready's care extended to the way costume was worn. He took great pains with his armour as Henry V, even wearing it at home, a hint gleaned from Talma. "Tried on the armour of Henry and dined in it." "Tried on my armour, which I wore through the afternoon, and was obliged at last to put off for its weight."[9] Even after the successful opening, he would re-familiarise himself with the armour during the day in preparation for the evening's performance.

Macready's approach to the costumes of the contemporary Money was equally fastidious. Technically, the production was not under Macready's direction, but under Webster's, who at one point protested forcefully about the additional expense he was incurring: "then there are extra scene painters, dresses, etc. I know you will say you do not compel me to this, but you also say, you will not act with such and such actors and unless such effects are produced by such scenery and such dresses it is of no use to attempt to bring out such and such pieces."[10] Webster's protest may have modified Macready's proprietorial attitude, but Macready and Bulwer gained their point in almost every particular.

The Count d'Orsay was invited to oversee and advise on the costumes, and Macready placed an order with the Count's hatter to ensure fashionable accuracy. Costume notes in one of the Knebworth manuscripts convey how closely the play and production aimed at reflecting contemporary society, or at least one rarefied sector of it. "Smooth 2nd dress Brown dress coat - silk facings, and vel(vet) collar. White stock like Prince Albert's

(get it at Joswith next door to Saunders and Otley) double frilled thigh tights!"; or, for Sir John Evelyn, Macready's part, "Very light grey stone cold. trousers; with broad silk stripe a la D'Orsay" [sic].[11]

Any actor as dependent upon touring as was Macready for major phases of his career would accumulate a carefully selected, and an equally carefully edited, range of roles. As has already been noted in connection with Byron's plays, Macready would cut, transpose, or add at will. At an early Bristol performance of Werner, it is reported that Macready inserted a line spontaneously. Rushing across to the actor playing Gabor, Macready demanded, in place of the rehearsed "Indeed!", "Are you a father?", hissing under his breath the instruction "Say no!" "No!" replied Gabor. "Ah then you cannot feel for misery like mine," said Macready/Werner.[12] This typical domestic touch became an established part of the acting text - the lines are included in the version "Altered, and Adapted for representation by William Macready" and "Corrected, and Marked from Prompt Book of Theatre Royal Drury La(ne) by John Willmott, Prompter".[13] Many of Macready's emendations to Werner were based on Byron's own source, Harriet Lee, though this stemmed more from convenience than from any innate respect for the material. Byron's text can scarcely be harmed by alteration.

Macready was equally ruthless in his treatment of living authors. At the opening of Richelieu, it was discovered that he had cut over 800 lines from Bulwer's original script, frequently substituting action for dialogue, and simplifying the plot line. Bulwer made some mild and tactful protests: a comic scene had been omitted, the dismissal of Baradas was too colloquial - "the thought of your conception is almost too subtle for the gigantic audiences you have".[14] Macready's journal the following day reveals that over-riding confidence in his own taste and judgment which was characteristic of his first reactions: "Two long notes from Bulwer - with more last words - and a lengthy criticism on some points

of my performance, in which he wishes me to substitute coarse and vulgar attempt at low farcical point in one instance, and melodramatic rant in another for the more delicate shadings of character that I endeavour to give. I have long had surmises about Bulwer's taste....Difficulty in answering Bulwer's notes without giving offence - at last dismissed his worrying prosings with brief generalities."[15] This was a sweeping condemnation for the most successful dramatist of the day, who had made a gift to Macready of the previous year's triumph, The Lady of Lyons. Yet it must be doubted whether Bulwer would have succeeded as a dramatist without the benefit of Macready's stern and uncompromising guidance. As Macready observed on March 31st, when writing a "courteous note" to Disraeli about a play he had submitted, "it is not so easy to write a play as a novel".[16] Macready's judgement was fallible, or perhaps, more simply, too attuned to the taste and conventions of his time. He rejected Dickens' farce The Lamplighter in the same month that he accepted Richelieu, and told Dickens and Forster that Oliver Twist, which they considered for adaptation, was impracticable for any dramatic purpose. Yet Macready, under the severest financial constraints, consistently tried to promote serious contemporary writing: Knowles, Talfourd, Bulwer, Griffin, Browning had their work presented at Covent Garden and Drury Lane through his efforts. Macready was able to make their work, or some of it, theatrically acceptable; he could not compensate for its lack of dramatic force.

Within the general nineteenth century tendency to restore the original text of Shakespeare, Macready was a major contributor. His influence was in evidence even before he assumed the management of the major theatres. Playing Lear for the first time in London, for Bunn at Drury Lane in 1834, he was responsible for banishing most of Tate's revisions, and for restoring the greater part of Shakespeare's text. "He has done much", commented the New Monthly Magazine "but he has left much undone. He has

given us Lear in his grandest and most appalling aspect; but he has denied him to us in that which would have touched our hearts most nearly, and moved most sensibly our pity. Ah! Mr Macready, why did you omit the Fool?"[17] In the case of Shakespeare, it is a curious feature how reluctant the theatres were to respond to critical advice of this kind, which shares with contemporary French commentary disappointment at the incompleteness of the proffered Shakespearean experience. However, when Macready assumed the management of Covent Garden he was able to take the crucial further step of including the Fool, for which he cast, with the help of a suggestion from his stage-manager, Bartley, the youthful Priscilla Horton (January 25th, 1838). This was an important landmark in Shakespearean restoration, re-inforced by Macready's stated intention in the announcement for his second season:

> "The revival of the standard plays of Shakespeare in the genuine text of the Poet will be persevered in with increased activity, and without regard to expense in attaining the utmost fidelity of historic illustration."[18]

Macready's fidelity remained selective. The Tempest (October 13th, 1838) was certainly that of Shakespeare rather than the version by Dryden and Davenant. Yet the storm scene was presented as wordless spectacle; and some of Dryden's text was retained to offer additional songs to the Ariel of Priscilla Horton.

Macready's interest in the effectiveness and appropriateness of stage-business was as acute as his attention to costume and language. Again, he exercised control where he was able. On the only occasion that he agreed to perform Sardanapalus, on tour, for his step-mother at Bristol, he wrote lengthy instructions with particular emphasis on the fire:

> "8 Guards will be enough - as many women as can be mustered - and ALL the company will be wanted. - About the fireworks....They should be attached to the Pile at the sides, and upon a low ground piece before it - also when lighted, fire may come from the top, and present the appearance of one blaze of fire."

Macready was not averse to spectacle, but sensitive to the possible pitfalls:

> "The advantage and superior effect of this is incalculable. Indeed in London the thing was always laughed at, and must be much worse in the country."[19]

During the rehearsals of Money, Bulwer's manservant was summoned to instruct the supernumeraries the correct way of handing a letter to their stage masters, while Macready set himself to study the art of playing piquet. These external details were meticulously integrated into the production :"Went to the theatre, where I spent two hours in the rehearsal of one page of the club scene in the new comedy."[20]

Macready's periods of management at Covent Garden at last gave him the opportunity to exercise control over every aspect of a production, constrained only - and it is a substantial constraint - by the need to temper his artistic principles to the level of the box-office receipts. On April 21st, 1838, for instance, he learned there was money sufficient for only one day's expenses. After the first full season he calculated that he had lost £1800; thereafter, the pressures eased. In the light of the bankruptcies of his predecessors and successors, the fact that he contrived to keep each theatre more or less solvent for two years each is a tribute to his skill as a manager. He began the enterprise in an attempt to arrest the decline of the legitimate stage; as his ideas developed, a programme for its transformation began to emerge. His claim at the start of his second Covent Garden season was uncompromising: "No exertion will be spared in presenting the National Drama, whether as a branch of literature or as a department of art, with every advantage."[21] The linchpin of the national drama was Shakespeare, and Macready strove to ensure a fitting and dignified context. The playbills were reformed: indiscriminate and inaccurate "puffing" was abolished. The audience was reformed: steps were taken to exclude prostitutes. The company he gathered, if lacking in

star attractions apart from himself, had great strength in depth; and most of them agreed (grumblingly) to far lower salaries than they were accustomed to, for the privilege of working in such a professional and high-minded environment.

As leading actors, Macready engaged James Anderson and Samuel Phelps, supported by Elton and Warde. As comic and utility players, there were Bartley, W.J. Hammond, Harley, Vining, Drinkwater Meadows. Helen Faucit and Miss Huddart (later Mrs Warner) were the leading ladies, supported by Miss Taylor, and Miss Priscilla Horton. All the principal players were considerably younger than Macready, and none was in a position to challenge him; significantly, the only actor who might conceivably have attempted to do so, Charles Kean, refused his offer. In spite of the pressures of management, Macready seldom relinquished a role in favour of Phelps, Anderson or, in the second season, Vandenhoff. Anderson, whose comments mingle gratitude with resentment, complained that Macready "never threw a chance away by letting another man in....Besides, he utilised us all in every play, and left no one out in case of accident. There was a leader for you! It was perfect Indian warfare - rank and file one long line, with Moccasin-Macready in front, and he took all the scalps."[22] Macready insisted on Anderson and Phelps being prepared to assume subsidiary roles, a task he himself found highly disagreeable. Towards the end of the first Covent Garden season he steeled himself to play Friar Lawrence. "I find playing a part of this sort, with no direct character to sustain, no effort to make, no power of perceiving an impression made, to be a very disagreeable and unprofitable task. Having required many of the actors to do what they considered beneath them, perhaps it was only a just sacrifice to their opinions to conclude so far - but it is for the first and last time."[23] The comment betrays how much at heart Macready remained an actor; he was unable, apparently, to assess the quality of his contri-

bution, though Anderson recalled: "I shall never again see such a Friar Lawrence, or listen to such melodious word-music; it was the perfection of harmonious elocution".[24] This experiment, however, came relatively early in Macready's managerial career. Phelps, later to assume a comparable managerial role, recalled that Mrs Warner was not particularly "entêté with the Queen of France, a part of twenty lines in Henry V. In fact, we all growled, but we all submitted, Vandenhoff was chief growler in the Chorus, Warde followed suit in Williams, Elton as Exeter, Anderson as Gower (a part of thirty lines), and I growled as loudly as any one, as the Constable of France. But our discontent was the public gain..."[25] The acceptance of the principle of ensemble acting was in itself something of a revolution.

Macready increased markedly the amount of time devoted to rehearsal. This arose partly from his wish to extend his own meticulous method of preparation to the rest of the cast, partly from his impulse to work with such large forces of supernumeraries, and to ensure that they were fully integrated within the general scheme of the play. A Macready rehearsal was a lengthy business, often made intensely irritating for the actors by the active presence of Macready's friends - Browning, Bulwer, Dickens, Maclise, Forster. James Anderson, recalling the rehearsals for Henry V, and chafing at his relegation to the role of Gower, recalls Mrs Humby (Mistress Quickly) objecting to their interventions:

> "I endeavoured to cheer her up a bit, and told her she would be all right yet if she would only pluck up a little courage, and laugh at the impertinence of those people on the stage. 'Laugh! Laugh!' cried she; 'my God! what human creature could raise a laugh when that ugly man (John Forster) seated beside the manager roars out when I miss a word, 'Put her through it again, Mac; put her through it again!' as if I were a piebald mare at Astley's.'"[26]

Mrs Humby was a simple woman - Anderson claims to have persuaded her that Forster was the author of Henry V - but the subservient role implied by this anecdote reflects the dictatorial nature of Macready's régime, in itself only an extreme example of the power exercised by managers such as

Bunn or Elliston. (Macready, bound by his contract, himself gave way to Bunn's insistence that he should play only the first three acts of Richard III, even if he did black Bunn's eye immediately after.) The story has, too, interesting implications for the relationship between the literary and theatrical worlds. The monologue, "Macready at Rehearsal", re-inforces the distinction:

> " Who is that talking at the wings? Henry! Henry! go down and tell the stage door keeper I expect him to go away - to leave the theatre immediately...Mr Forster - oh, show Mr Forster to my room; no, stop! My dear Dickens, how d'you do? Talfourd! your hand; another and another! Browning! Bulwer! a-a-walk into the green-room. Mr Bender, go on; why do you wait? Where is Mr Willmott? I-I-this is exceedingly bad! Will you make a beginning? Where are the-the-officers?..."[27]

There is ample evidence of the intense interest of writers such as Dickens and Bulwer in the theatre. Yet there seems a distance, social and temperamental, between them and the majority of the actors and actresses, exemplified also by Macready's own ambivalence about the nature of his profession. The kind of exchange between playwright and interpreter recorded by Dumas and Vigny in their encounters with Mlle Mars seems inconceivable under Macready's stiff régime.

The sense of purpose and unity imparted to the company's work was solely the responsibility of Macready himself. Years later, he analysed the great difference between his management and that of others and ascribed the cause to this: "that I thought for and acted to myself every character and every supernumerary figure, and taught them to act as I would have done had I been cast in their places. Thus there was the mind of a first actor moving and harmonizing the action of the mass."[28]

Macready's grandiose language seems almost to echo the Genesis account of the creation. At the same time it reveals "a concern at once more modern and more classical in considering a Shakespeare play as a total

performed action rather than a vehicle for personal display".[29] His concern for the correct balance between the parts, and for the right relationship between text and spectacle, lies behind his criticism of a Charles Kean production: "the text allowed to be spoken was more like a running commentary upon the spectacles exhibited than the scenic arrangements an illustration of the text".[30]

Macready's dominance had two particular drawbacks. In teaching his company to act as he would have done had he "been cast in their places", he imparted to them his own mannerisms of diction and posture. The News and Sunday Herald, admittedly a hostile witness, reviewing the Covent Garden Macbeth, reported: "The music is well performed, but the whole of the acting, from Mrs Huddart's Lady Macbeth down to the most insignificant part in the piece is an aping of Macready in a greater or a less degree, according to the ability of each to imitate his master. Gentlemen with one line to speak contrive to chop it up and interlard it with catchings of the breath, and asthmatic gasps, simply because it is the style of the manager." What Macready had developed in an attempt to become more natural, to make the dramatist's creations familiar and intelligible to an audience, could in others become as artificial, as mechanical as the more formal and remote style of John Kemble. The kinds of effect, for instance the "domestic touch", which Macready himself was capable of achieving were not easily accomplished by others within the context of Covent Garden productions, which seem in retrospect to be thrusting drama in the direction of grand opera.

The second drawback, arising from Macready's dominance, resulted in a somewhat restricted repertory. For his pathological suspicion towards potential male rivals, Macready was not especially remarkable. In establishing and maintaining a distance between himself and his female leads, he demonstrated a peculiarly English trait. Macready's choice of

plays, both Shakespearean and contemporary, tended to relegate women to supporting roles. In the first Covent Garden season the most frequently performed plays of Shakespeare were Macbeth (18), Lear (10), and Coriolanus (8); Romeo and Juliet (with Anderson as Romeo and Helen Faucit as Juliet) was given only twice, and only one early comedy, As You Like It, was performed during the two seasons, with Helen Faucit twice appearing as Rosalind to Anderson's Orlando. The closest she came to a part of equality was that of Pauline in Bulwer's The Lady of Lyons. Later, at Drury Lane, Macready seemed more flexible, mounting As You Like It, in which he played Jaques and Louisa Nisbett Rosalind, and Much Ado About Nothing, with himself as a surprising Benedick and Miss Nisbett Beatrice. Overall, however, there was a preponderance of tragedy and drama, and an emphasis on the ensemble rather than on the individual, himself excepted. The tone of the domestic moment from The Lady of Lyons (Melnotte's cottage in Act Four) is (Fig.56) less characteristic than Act Five, scene two in Richelieu which demanded, (Fig.57) in addition to the eight principals, fifteen courtiers, seven pages, eight archers, three secretaries, six sub-secretaries, two priests and four gentlemen - fifty-three actors in all.

The first Covent Garden season began cautiously, with The Winter's Tale followed by Hamlet, first presented on October 2nd, 1837. The stage arrangement was largely familiar. George Scharf's outline illustration of Act 3 scene 1 reflects a stage-grouping identical to that noted in John Kemble's Covent Garden promptbook, and therefore a tradition reaching back certainly thirty and most probably sixty years. Othello, again, was (Fig.59) broadly traditional, though the Council-scene (Act 1 scene 3) is an interesting indication of the general direction Macready intended to steer. (Fig.60) The Kemble Covent Garden promptbook records the skeleton of the stage (Fig.61) arrangement. The Drury Lane promptbook of 1843 shows how the original was fleshed out, and clearly relates closely to the Scharf illustration. The

emphasis is towards spectacle; a spectacle that contributed to the sense of grandeur that Macready believed was appropriate, and by extension to the visual richness of the stage picture, as Scharf implies in his Address: the artist, he wrote, was "aware of the inadequacy of outline, however well executed, to convey a complete idea of those scenic effects, whose pictorial characteristics depend as much on the artistic combinations of color in the different objects as on the groupings of the persons".[32] The Examiner, in the person of the faithful Forster, described the setting:

> "The withdrawal of the scene that showed the council-chamber...absolutely revealed to us a fac-simile of the great picture by Tintoretto. A real 'council of forty' were upon the stage, attended by their secretary and messengers, and presided over by Mr Bartley in the robes of the Doge. The 'Ten' sate on a raised dais which extended through the whole breadth of the apartment - the Doge a little elevated above the rest - and the other senators in exact costume, on lower seats, lined the two sides of the hall. We never beheld a finer pictorial effect upon the stage. The subsequent breaking up of the council and their dispersion was reality itself, and grand in its simplicity."[33]

Macready thought it "a scene of beautiful effect, one of the most real things I ever saw", and was irritated the next day that not one of the papers noticed the mise en scène: "So much for the assistance of the Press."[34]

Macbeth (November 6th, 1837) and King Lear (January 25th, 1838) made a stronger impact. Of the former, John Bull wrote: "The poetry of the drama is now for the first time put in motion, and its supernatural agents begin to assume their real functions."[35] In King Lear, the concentration on the mise en scène was felt throughout the play, rather than in isolated scenes. "The castles are heavy, sombre, and solid; their halls are adorned with trophies of the chase and instruments of war; druid circles rise in spectral loneliness on the heath; and the 'dreadful pother' of the elements

is kept up with a verisimilitude which beggars all that we have hitherto seen attempted."[36] The rehearsal period began on January 4th, according to Macready's Diaries: this accords with Helen Faucit's recollection - "Rehearsals began at ten in the morning, and usually went on until three or four. When reviving an old, or bringing out a new play, these rehearsals were as a rule continued daily for three weeks at least, sometimes for four or five."[37] It was not until the first rehearsal that Macready began to have anxieties about the effect of the Fool. "My opinion of the introduction of the Fool is that, like many such terrible contrasts in poetry and painting, in acting representation it will fail of effect; it will either weary and annoy or distract the spectator. I have no hope of it, and think that at the last we shall be obliged to dispense with it."[38] The next day Macready mentioned his apprehension to Bartley, the stage-manager, which centred around the capacity of Meadows in the part; Bartley "observed that a woman should play it", which led Macready to think of Miss Horton as "the sort of fragile, hectic, beautiful-faced, half-idiot-looking boy that he should be".[39] The restoration of the Fool reflects one aspect of Macready's boldness; another is shown in his ideas for the Coriolanus settings, with more than a hundred white-robed fathers in the Senate scene, an effect of perspective achieved by the use of boys as the more distant figures; or the massed ranks of the Volscian army at the siege of Rome, complete with battering-rams and moving towers, who parted to make way for the Roman matrons, "one long dreary sable line of monotonous misery". Even the Times, which gave the production a mere seventeen lines - "about six lines of the coldest, faintest kind of admission" according to Macready[40] - conceded that "the organization of the mob was exceedingly clever"[41]; other critics went further, and recorded that the plebeians were "now for the first time shown upon the stage as agents of the tragic catastrophe".[42]

The kind of visual and interpretative re-thinking implicit in these accounts of Coriolanus was developed most fully in Macready's production of Henry V, the most ambitious, though not necessarily the most artistically successful, of his Shakespearean productions. Its first performance was on June 10th, 1839, and it was given a further twenty performances before the close of the season, and of Macready's Covent Garden management, on July 16th. It was, in part, a characteristic Macready response to what he considered was the greed and the stupidity of the proprietors; in part, a wish to apply to the last degree, in this final Shakespearean revival, the principles which had been explored in previous productions. As early as December 30th, 1838, the project had been forming in Macready's mind: "Talked with Letitia over King Henry, explaining to her how I would produce it. Resolved to defer it to Easter, and make it the last Shakespearean revival of my management."[43]

Henry V was conceived as pictorial Shakespeare on the most magnificent (Fig. 63, 64) scale. When discussing the possibility on December 27th, Serle observed that "the choruses would admit of illustration, a hint which I instantly caught at".[44] On April 7th, 1839, Macready called on Clarkson Stanfield, whom he wished to use for the "illustrative" dioramic scenes to accompany the choruses, customarily omitted. The innovation was considered startling enough to require an explanation, which was printed on the playbills:

> " The Play of King Henry 5th is a DRAMATIC HISTORY, and the Poet, to preserve the continuity of the action, and connect what would otherwise be detached scenes, has adopted, from the GREEK DRAMA, the expedient of a CHORUS to narrate and describe intervening incidents and events.
>
> To impress more strongly on the auditor, and render more palpable these portions of the story which have not the advantage of action, and still are requisite to the Drama's completeness, the narrative and descriptive poetry spoken by the Chorus is accompanied with PICTORIAL ILLUSTRATIONS from the pencil of MR STANFIELD."[45]

Rendering "more palpable" might be taken as the key-note to this production, indeed to Macready's productions as a whole. The Examiner gave the play a long and laudatory review;[46] being by Forster, it is clearly biased in Macready's favour, but at the same time is likely to reflect his intentions faithfully. It began by scrutinizing the principles of staging the history plays, and by describing a characteristic production of Henry V from the pre-Macready era (the performance of November, 1837, without a single bowman at Agincourt, represents the tradition):

> "The power of England, under a shabby painted flag, mustered in the shape of some seven ragged supernumeraries; the might of France, flagless and bannerless, crawled on in three. A trumpet and drum expressed the fiercest agonies of battle, and two or three of the supernumeraries aforesaid, lying as if overtaken by liquor, declared its bloodiest results. Then entered the rival kings, one at the side scene on the right and the other at the side scene on the left, to smell in the centre at one nosegay like their respected brother kings of Brentford."

To the assumed argument of "What did Shakespeare care about decorations?" the Examiner replied that "The poet's poverty and not his will consented to mean deficiencies of illustrative resources in the theatres of his time." Shakespeare wrote "for posterity as well as his contemporaries, he never shaped his plays to those defects; because he knew that, sooner or later, the stage must become capable of its own function; which was, 'from the first till now', to address the imaginations of men in the visible language of the senses, and in every respect, so far as it is practicable, to hold a mirror up to nature." Arguing from "Shakespeare's own" stage direction from the Chorus to Act Three:

> "And the nimble gunner
> With linstock now the devilish cannon touches
> (Alarum; and chambers go off)
> And down goes all before him."

the reviewer posits a dramatic text replete with hints for the scene-painter, carpenter and property-man - "or rather for the artistical taste and genius which can alone employ with intellectual correctness these

acquisitions of a modern theatre". Taking his argument to the extremes of speculation, he asserts that Shakespeare had "little care" for the form his verse assumed in the Choruses and that he would have gladly shared the honour with the Stanfield of his day "to convey by such means more sensibly those earnest truths and exquisite images of beauty which he thought needful to connect with his subject".

From a standpoint which so elevates the visual, the concrete, the palpable, Macready's production could be claimed as the apotheosis of the national drama. Though opinions about the appropriateness of the style might vary, Macready clearly sought to create a consistent and unified approach. "Nothing in this Henry the Fifth seems to us to have been officiously or gratuitously interposed. The general effect is made out by each separate detail. A gorgeous succession of ornaments and objects, combine in a simple grandeur and comprehensive magnificence. Everything contributes to its life, its vigour, its picturesqueness. The minutest matter employed has its proper task to perform, nor is the least important person engaged without his distinct and allotted place in the general design."[47] Both the history genre, and the particular play, lends itself to this kind of treatment. It remains an impressive achievement to convey so powerful a sense of unity, of the particular effect within the general design, in a play of such an episodic nature and of such a scale: the play-bill names eightyfour actors. Even those critics who expressed misgivings about the nature of the enterprise paid tribute to the quality of the mise en scène: "a general propriety and efficiency characterizes the whole: the strength of the company, and the good drilling of principals and subordinates, are manifest throughout."[48] The Spectator shrewdly, if unkindly, suggested that the play held "the additional recommendation to the manager of a principal character that predominates in every scene of importance"; yet it is the sense of an ensemble which is most strongly

conveyed by accounts of the production. As the Examiner commented, "We have left ourselves little room to speak of the acting in detail, and can only say...that it was quite worthy of the occasion. Mr Macready's Henry the Fifth is well known, but was never appreciated as it will be now."[49] The emphasis is clearly placed upon the physical elements of the production, which created a proper context for acting which remained substantially the same.

Even in terms of textual restoration, this Henry V remained conservative. The playbill announced it as "from the text of Shakespeare". The Spectator criticised the omission of much of the early comic dialogue and incident: "Portions of this being unsuited to the present day, are properly omitted; but to cut out the whole of that capital scene (the first of the second act) between Bardolph, Nym, and Pistol, transposing another, and almost suppressing a third, is going too far;..." The first scene between Canterbury and Ely was omitted; "and other fine passages, such for instance as the apt comparison of a well-ordered state to the economy of bees, and the affecting episode of the deaths of York and Suffolk, are struck out." Even with the "Once more unto the breach" speech, Macready "omitted the comparison between behaviour in peace and war, and the vivid picture of the warrior nerved for action; merely because it suits his purpose to convert a deliberate exhortation into a sudden rallying-cry."[50]

Stanfield's contribution was to provide illustration for the Chorus, who was conceived as Time. The play's first image was a drapery with the arms of France and England emblazoned on either side. This parted to reveal Vandenhoff, as Time, standing on a pedestal, with scythe and hour-glass, on one side of "an immense scenic framework, its oval aperture closed with clouds; which unfolding, reveal an allegorical representation of King Henry, with the daemons of war in his train." This allegorical

element is of interest as a prelude to the more literal representation to follow. The picture that accompanied the second chorus was of the English traitors; those that followed were dioramas showing the embarkation of Henry, and his passage across the Channel, which melted ingeniously into the siege of Harfleur; the condition of the two camps before Agincourt; and Henry's triumphal entry into London. Stanfield's skill was supreme; "the triumph of his art is shown in the landscape and marine views - the sunset at sea luminous and glowing, and the eye traverses the surface to the airy distance as in nature: the land scenes are fresh and atmospheric, and the bright moonlight reflected in the river is the nearest approach to reality the stage has ever given: in a word, these scenes are an exhibition in themselves."[51]

The impact of the scenery within the play itself was equally powerful. "The first scene, where the King sits enthroned, surrounded by his courtiers, to receive the Ambassadors, is a gorgeous picture of regal pomp; the stone niches and statues in the upper part of the walls massing the glitter below." This is the scene recorded by Scharf and described by the Examiner thus: "When the vision of Harry with famine fire and sword crouching at his feet, recalled by the chorus before the first act, suddenly dispersed, we saw a chamber in the royal palace that expressed this to the life. Above was a stony barrenness; below the encroachments of civilization; and in the occupants of the scene that soul of chivalrous barbarity which pervaded the time."[52] It is understandable that, in striving for effects like this, Macready would dispense with such apparent interludes as the Canterbury/Ely dialogue, concerned with more abstract concepts. Similarly, when Stanfield's diorama melted to reveal the walls of Harfleur, manned by French troops, it would be stretching credulity to have them, as the Spectator complained, "quietly looking over the walls" for too long while Henry urged his soldiers on to the breach. The "rage

for over-embellishing" had many attendant dangers; John Bull drew attention to the anachronism of Macready kneeling down on the battlefield at the end of Act Four,

> " Do we all holy rites:
> Let there be sung non nobis and Te Deum."

when "the curtain falls to the solemn strains of an organ, brought from England, we suppose, for the purpose."[53]

Objections might be made over detail. But Macready was himself conscious of the dangers of over-representation. On June 5th, he sent for Stanfield "and laid before him my objection to the trick-ship in the diorama, as giving a character of pageant and pantomime to the whole production; he agreed with me, and arranged differently on my suggestion."[54] (Stanfield had executed a comparable diorama, Scenes at Home and Abroad, in the 1837 Christmas pantomime, Harlequin and Peeping Tom of Coventry.) Each scene was integrated into the overall concept. "Business with Stanfield, who came to consult me on the subject of the painting of the Conspiracy," (the English traitors) "in which he had sketched a thought that I had before entertained, but I do not, on reflection, feel quite sure about."[55] Macready strove always to ensure that the visual, whether achieved by means of scenery or actors, or more usually by a combination of the two, gave concrete expression to the ideas and images of the dramatist. In later years, discussing Kean's revival of The Winter's Tale with Lady Pollock, Macready admitted some measure of responsibility for the growing emphasis on the visual. "I, in my endeavour to give Shakespeare all his attributes, to enrich his poetry with scenes worthy of its interpretation, to give to his tragedies their true magnificence, and to his comedies their entire brilliancy, have set an example which is accompanied with great peril, for the public is willing to have the magnificence without the tragedy, and the poet is swallowed up in display."[56]

One final example shows Macready unfolding the brilliancy of Shakespeare's comedy, in his production of As You Like It which opened his second Drury Lane season on October 1st, 1842. This was cited by Phelps as the supreme example of those "performances given under that management which were never equalled in the past, and never can be excelled in the future".[57] The strength of the casting is indicated by Phelps playing Adam and Macready Jaques; the scenery was by Stanfield, the music by Beethoven (from the Pastoral Symphony). This extract from the Drury Lane promptbook records how Macready used supporting actors to give point and context to the wrestling-scene:

> "Groups of Courtiers and Ladies, enter up terrace steps, L and move upon the scene, as if awaiting the wrestling. Attendts enter, and begin to place chairs, and prepare the ring, with ropes and pillars. As the Courtiers catch sight of Celia, or Rosalind, they salute them respectfully. As the Duke and Suite enter - Rosalind, Celia etc retire towards R 2 E, where attendts are placing seats, many of the Courtiers and Ladies are crowding round Charles, as if congratulating him, - he is, apparently, full of confidence, - other courtiers are talking together, all in high glee, in regarding Charles, and, occasionally, glancing sneeringly at Orlando, who stands, modestly apart at back L 3 E-"[58]

These notations reveal the mind and attitude of a director, rather than a "first actor". The visual ambitions, and the numerical forces, might be more susceptible to film treatment. At the same time, they represent the development and extension throughout the mise en scène of the impulse towards naturalism in acting style discussed earlier.

It is instructive to place, against this strong and distinctive approach of Macready as director, his reaction to Rachel's London appearance of 1841. Macready was always grateful for the warmth of his own reception in Paris, both on his two visits of 1828 and during the winter of 1844-45. He formed close associations with writers such as Alfred de Vigny and George Sand, and took the part of the French actors in 1848 when the

Théâtre Historique's production of Monte Cristo was attacked at Drury Lane. On May 5th, 1841, he called on Rachel and her mother, and invited her to dine - characteristically preparing himself for the occasion by reading a course of French which included Balzac and Sévigné; on July 5th, he went to the Opera House - Her Majesty's Theatre - to see Rachel play Emilie in Corneille's Cinna. His first impression was one of disappointment. "She has no tenderness, nor has she grandeur. She did not dilate with passion; the appeal to the gods was not that grand swell of passion that lifts her up above the things (too little for its communion) of earth to the only powers capable of sympathising with her."[59] On July 16th, he returned to see Rachel as Camille in Horace, when his opinion of her "was very greatly raised. If I might apply a term of distinction to the French acting, I should say it is sculpturesque in its effect; it resembles figures in relief, no background, and almost all in single figures, scarcely any grouping, no grand composition; this sort of individual effect may be good for the artist, but not for the illusion of a play. With the drawback consequent on this national peculiarity, Rachel in Camille was generally admirable...her feeling was almost always true. In a grand opportunity, 'Courage! ils s'amollissent' - I thought her deficient. But in the last scene she was all that a representation of the part could be. It was a splendid picture of frenzied despair."[60] The actor in Macready regretted the apparent restraint at moments of "grand opportunity"; but it is the director's comments that point up the distinctions between English and French practice most markedly. The lack of grouping, of "grand composition", emphasises the role of the individual artist, but at the expense of "the illusion of the play". French classical acting reflected the form and structure of French classical tragedy. Shakespeare, on the other hand, was susceptible to the naturalistic developments in acting style and in mise en scène which had evolved during the previous quarter century, so

that Macready's Shakespearean productions could be regarded not just as National drama, but as contemporary National drama. When Queen Victoria attended King Lear at Covent Garden, the republican Macready would make a point of directing at her the lines, "Poor naked wretches!"

Madame Vestris, in a more restricted way, made a contribution to scenic reform, and to the development of a style of acting, which was complementary to that of Macready. Born Lucy Bartolozzi, the grand-daughter of the engraver, she married first the dancer Armand Vestris, and later Charles Mathews the younger. She made her début at the King's Theatre on July 20th, 1815, during her first husband's benefit, and appeared as a singer there during the following season. She moved next to Paris, singing at the Théâtre Italien in December, 1816. For the succeeding three years she was probably based in Paris, where tradition suggests she was engaged at the Théâtre Ambigu and the Opéra Comique. She then returned to England and appeared at Drury Lane (February 19th, 1820) as Lilla in The Siege of Belgrade. Crabb Robinson recorded his impressions: "my admiration he" (the singer Braham) "shared with a new actress or rather singer, who will become I have no doubt, the darling of the public - a Madame Vestris - she is by birth English and her articulation is not that of a foreigner, but she looks walks and gesticulates so very French that I almost thought myself in the Theatre Feydeau. She has great feeling and naiveté in her acting and I am told she is a capital singer..."[61] The combination of "naiveté" with the observation that "she looks walks and gesticulates so very French that I almost thought myself in the Theatre Feydeau" emphasises the qualities of simplicity and natural grace that were the distinctive marks, for an English critic, of French acting and French manners; qualities which were admired repeatedly in English criticisms of the acting of Jenny Colon and Jenny Vertpré. A week later, Robinson modified his

first impression by commenting that "her manner has more of affectation in it than I was aware of".[62] Vestris proceeded to a successful stage career in comedy and musical drama, specialising in male impersonations (in roles such as Macheath). However, it was as a manager and producer that she made her most enduring impact, principally at the Olympic theatre between 1831 and 1839, and subsequently at Covent Garden where, with the assistance of Charles Mathews, she succeeded Macready in 1839, and survived for almost three seasons before economic pressure drove her out.

Severe restrictions were placed on the possible repertory at the Olympic, since it was licensed only for burletta. Vestris was compelled, therefore, to present a programme consisting mainly of burlesques, many of them by Planché and Dance, fairy extravaganzas such as those by, again, Planché, and short comedies and vaudevilles taken chiefly from the French. As Bulwer wrote, "If the French Theatre lives upon murders, the English exists upon robberies; it steals every thing it can lay its hands upon; today it filches a French farce, tomorrow it becomes sacrilegious, and commits a burglary on the Bible."[63] Planché, light-fingered in his kid gloves, appropriated the drama of the boulevard theatres throughout his career as costume adviser and dramaturge: seeing Potier in a comédie féerie by Saurin and Brazier in 1821 at the Porte-Saint-Martin, he "brought it with him to England, and fifteen years afterwards it formed the foundation of the first of those fairy extravaganzas which for so long a period enjoyed without one breakdown almost unprecedented popularity".[64] (Ironically, Planché brought the first reported case in Britain after the introduction of the Dramatic Copyright Act 1833, when he took Braham to Court, successfully, in 1838 for incorporating some words of his, written for Weber's Oberon, in a new version of the opera.)

However light or unoriginal the piece, each Olympic production was mounted with meticulous attention to period and detail, and whenever she

was available Vestris would watch performances from her private box, "noticing the slightest imperfection, and seeking to increase effects instead of allowing them to be gradually destroyed by time and carelessness".[65] Vestris would even have a play re-costumed during a long run, frequently choosing both the materials and the colour scheme herself. This practice, begun at the Olympic, was continued at Covent Garden. The playbill for Love's Labour's Lost (Covent Garden, September 30th, 1839) states that the dresses were "sketched" by Planché, but that the "materials and harmony of colour" were selected and arranged by Madame Vestris.

Mathews (who did not marry Vestris until 1838) includes the following significant passage in his autobiography, in which he links his distaste for the "regular drama" with the kind of scenic reform introduced by Vestris:

> "I had no respect for traditional acting, and had no notion of taking 'a line of business', as it is called - that is, undertaking for so much per week all the characters in comedy and tragedy, whether fitting or not, played by Mr Charles Kemble, or Mr Jones, or Mr Elliston, whose every movement was registered in the promptbook, and from whose 'business', as it is technically termed, no deviation was allowed. The lighter phase of comedy, representing the more natural and less laboured school of modern life, and holding the mirror up to nature without regard to the conventionalities of the theatre, was the aim I had in view. The Olympic was then the only house where this could be achieved, and to the Olympic I at once attached myself."[66]

Mathews is perhaps setting, retrospectively, too high a premium on his value at this point in his career; he had inherited a flair for theatre from his father, but almost no practical experience. However, his description convincingly defines the constrictions of the old style of acting, traditional, authoritarian, theatrical, conventional. At the Olympic, by contrast,

> "There was introduced for the first time in England that reform in all theatrical matters which has since been adopted in every theatre in the kingdom. Drawing-

> rooms were fitted up like drawing-rooms, and furnished with care and taste. Two chairs no longer indicated that two persons were to be seated, the two chairs being removed indicating that the two persons were not to be seated. A claret-coloured coat, salmon-coloured trousers with a broad black stripe, a sky-blue neckcloth with large paste brooch, and a cut-steel eye-glass with a pink ribbon no longer marked the 'light comedy gentleman', and the public at once recognised and appreciated the change."[67]

The smaller dimensions of the Olympic fostered the emphasis on the natural, as opposed to the necessarily theatrical, in acting style, costume and décor. The drawing-room served as the criterion of both manners and furnishings, just as it was the customary setting for so many of the shorter comic pieces. It was a logical progression to enhance the atmosphere of natural intimacy with a box-set, or at least a set which replaced the wing-system with lateral scenery which included working doors. Bernard's The Conquering Game (November 28th, 1832) has been claimed as the occasion for the first box-set in England. Another setting which certainly displays the salient features of a box-set is that for Planché's Court Favour (1836). (Fig. 65) The chandelier draws the eye down to the characters; the folding door called for in the stage directions is clearly functional; there is some kind of floor covering on the stage; through the glass doors can be seen both garden and landscape; the eternal two chairs are present, but, placed where they are, must be present for naturalistic rather than conventional purposes, like the pair of jardinières. The lady's sitting-room in Thomas Haynes Bayly's One Hour, or The Carnival Ball (January 12th, 1836) called for "a large practicable clock...a cage with two birds, a glass globe with two gold and silver fish - a table with workbox, guitar, writing materials". The nature mirrored was the social and domestic world of the spectators.

The idea of the drawing-room was dominant at the Olympic. The theatre held about 1300, a third of the capacity of Covent Garden or Drury Lane.

From the front of the stage to the back of the pit, the distance was only 50 feet, and the proscenium was only some 25 feet wide. After the first twelve week season, the stage was re-designed by Samuel Beazley, who abolished the proscenium doors and introduced traps throughout the stage, while the auditorium was redecorated: "The whole has a gay and pleasing effect and will present to view the elegance and finish of a drawing-room."[68] Vestris suspended the free list, ensured that performances ended at 11 p.m., and attracted, in spite of the theatre's unfashionable location, the "upper ten thousand". The tone of the light comedy acting may be inferred from this letter of Planché to Mathews: "You are the first actor I have seen in the course of my exceptionally long life who has realised on the stage the peculiarities of English gentlemen, giving 'the very age and body of the time, its form and pressure'."[69]

When Vestris assumed the management of Covent Garden in 1839, she was able at last to mount productions of legitimate comedy with the same finesse that she had consistently displayed at the Olympic. Planché, with his long-established sense of antiquarian accuracy, accompanied her to supervise the costumes, and the Grieves returned from Drury Lane as scene-painters. School for Scandal (1839) was set scrupulously in the costume and décor of its time: John Bull commented that "Each apartment is elegant and substantial, not merely in accordance with the station of the occupier, but in what may be presumed to have been his or her taste."[70] This indicates an approach not slavishly antiquarian, but one in which the mise en scène is carefully calculated to elucidate character and mood.

In terms of repertory, Vestris and Mathews sensibly reflected their own strengths and limitations, so that there were only 8 nights of tragedy in 1839-40, and none the succeeding two seasons, in striking contrast to the more serious tone of Macready's two preceding seasons. Shakespeare was not their particular forte, but they nevertheless revived Love's Labour's

Lost, and experimented with an Athenian mise en scène for A Midsummer Night's Dream. This particular production reveals continuity with the general ideas of Macready, to give physical reality to the images of Shakespeare's text. "It was accordingly arranged with Grieve...that the back of the stage should be so constructed that at the command of Oberon it should be filled with fairies, bearing twinkling coloured lights, 'flitting through the house', and forming groups and dancing, as indicated in the text, carrying out implicitly the directions of the author, and not sacrilegiously attempting to gild his refined gold."[71]

Dion Boucicault's first play, London Assurance, which was given 69 performances in the 1840-41 season, benefitted markedly from Vestris' production. The play was not regarded as a modern comedy by most of the critics - the Spectator labelled it a farce, and the Athenaeum also recognized the discrepancy between the style of the production and the style of the writing: "Clever acting, and a perfect mise en scène, contributed materially to the prosperity of the 'comedy'; but the adroitness with which the venerable personages of bygone times were tricked out in modern costume and phraseology, and passed off as representative of an existing state of society, had a due share in so amusing the audience as to render them accessories to the cheat that was put upon them."[72] Yet if the play was a pale imitation of Restoration and eighteenth-century comedy, the settings mirrored reality. "The stage presents a succession of perfect illusions. The outside of a countryhouse with a verandah overgrown with roses and honeysuckle, and a lawn in front with beds of flowers, is not a mere painted scene, but a seeming reality: the visitors go in and out of the French windows, and a carpeted room is seen through them: the drawing-room is as superbly furnished as any mansion need be; the papered walls, and carved and gilded cornices, and chairs with fauteuils and ottoman en suite to the crimson and damask curtains, are set

off by large vases, and a chandelier in which green relieves the glare of red and gold: the taste is commensurate with the splendour of the fittings."[73] The Athenaeum reiterates this sense of reality: "the stage in each instance presents rather a realization than a mimic representation. The garden scene, with its beds of flowers, and the verandah entwined with creeping plants, and the drawing-room, with its superb furniture and fittings, are actualities: the windows have blinds, cornices and curtains, as real and splendid as the chairs, tables, and ottoman. These solid accessories, moreover, are not only splendid, but in good taste."

These extracts are evidence of Vestris' thorough oversight of costume and setting, in which to Macready's eye for detail she added a more delicate and flexible understanding of line and colour. At the close of her and Mathew's tenure, the Theatrical Observer acknowledged: "The mise en scène was never perfect or in good keeping until Mme Vestris taught her painters how to execute, and the public how to appreciate, her own pictorial conception."[74] At the same time, the reactions testify to a decidedly literal interpretation of the nature of stage illusion, as though the only convincing set, from a spectator's point of view, was one which could be comfortably lived in, while at the same time proving flattering to his taste.

An idea of the imaginative limitation of stage-design and stage concept, even when executed as thoughtfully as in the partnership of Vestris and Grieve, or Macready and Stanfield, may be gauged from the response to Stanfield's painting The Castello d'Ischia from the Mole, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1841. Ruskin's comment, "It would be well if (Stanfield's art) would take a higher flight" is linked to this picture: "The Castle of Ischia gave him a grand subject, and a little more savageness in the sea, would have made it an impressive picture; it just misses the sublime..."[75] On Christmas Eve, 1838, Stanfield saw the

violent storm that is the picture's subject, and the following description was displayed with the painting at the Royal Academy:

> "On Monday, December 24th, 1838, it blew a heavy gale from the south-west; several small craft from Procida and Baiae, moored without the mole that connects the castle with the town of Ischia, parted from their moorings, and one - a felucca - was entirely wrecked, and it was with difficulty the crew were saved!"[76]

The sense of immediacy, of "real" experience transferred through the art of the painter to the spectator, is the quality praised by the Examiner: "This picture sends a positive freshness up the room. We breathe the painted gale from the south east; we can hardly keep on our hats; coat tails are in extreme agitation; and, with the other small craft of spectators, we keep to our moorings with extreme difficulty....It is high art in Mr Stanfield to give us this exquisite perspicuity and finish - in place of the blur and indistinctness which is so often, and so very easily, substituted for it."[77] The exquisite finish of the Grieves or Stanfield too often came to dominate the artistic unity of the drama. Even opera could not always compete. One of Macready's most polished productions at Drury Lane was Handel's Acis and Galatea (February 5th, 1842), in which Macready aimed to accomplish for one of the "Greatest Composers of the English School of Music" what he had already achieved for Shakespeare. He directed the last rehearsal. "Stanfield and the assistants painting to the last minute. Saw the performance of the opera, which was beautiful; have never seen anything of the kind in my life so perfectly beautiful."[78] This was high praise from Macready, who considered opera in general a most inferior form of art to drama, and especially to Shakespeare. But it was the scenes which were the principal object of attention. When Stanfield's effect of a "rolling wave" appeared, in the "Grotto on the Coast of Sicily by Moonlight, Aetna in the Distance", the audience gazed on it "for a moment, as it were in dumb astonishment, and then burst into acclamations, in which Handel's beautiful music for a time, was wholly lost."[79] Illusion had taken the place of art.

CHAPTER 7 : NOTES

1. Spectator, January 27th, 1838, p.88.

2. "Then, what a cry came with, 'Oh, she's warm!' It is impossible to describe Mr. Macready here. He was Leontes' very self! His passionate joy at finding Hermione really alive seemed beyond control. Now he was prostrate at her feet, then enfolding her in his arms. I had a slight veil or covering over my head and neck, supposed to make the statue look older. This fell off in an instant. The hair, which came unbound, and fell on my shoulders, was reverently kissed and caressed. The whole change was so sudden, so overwhelming, that I suppose I cried out hysterically, for he whispered to me, 'Don't be frightened, my child! don't be frightened! Control yourself!...the intensity of Mr. Macready's passion was so real, that I never could help being moved by it, and feeling much exhausted afterwards."

   Description by Helen Faucit, quoted by Sir Theodore Martin, Helena Faucit, Lady Martin, Edinburgh, 1900, p.49.

3. Eleanor Ransome (ed.), The Terrific Kemble, London, 1978. pp.209-10.

4. John and Edward Coleman, Memoirs of Samuel Phelps, London, 1886. pp.164-5.

5. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.423.

6. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.423.

7. Macready, Reminiscences, vol.1, p.209.

8. Macready, letter to Alfred Bunn, Harvard Theatre Collection, quoted in Downer, Eminent Tragedian, p.235.

9. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.6.

10. Benjamin Webster, letter to Macready, draft in Harvard Theatre Collection, quoted in Downer, Eminent Tragedian, pp.199-200.

11. Manuscript at Knebworth, quoted by Dewey Ganzel, "Bulwer-Lytton as dramatist", Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958. Microfilm, Chicago, 1973, p.222 et seq.

12. John Coleman, Players and Playwrights I Have Known. 2 vols. London, 1889. Vol.1, p.47. The actor playing Gabor was Charles Kemble Mason.

13. Lord Byron, Werner. London, 1823. A facsimile of the acting version of William Charles Macready, ed. M. Spevack. Munich, 1970.
14. Bulwer-Lytton, letter to Macready, March 12th, 1839, quoted in Macready, Diaries, vol.1, pp.501-2, note.
15. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, pp.501-2.
16. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.506.
17. New Monthly Magazine, June, 1834. The article is entitled "King Lear, 'As Shakespeare Wrote It'", pp.218-23.
18. J.C. Trewin, Mr Macready, London, 1955. p.148.
19. Macready, letter to George Macready, August 10th, 1832, quoted in Downer, Eminent Tragedian, p.236.
20. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.92.
21. Trewin, Mr Macready, p.148.
22. James R. Anderson, An Actor's Life. London, 1902, p.64.
23. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.455.
24. Anderson, An Actor's Life, p.76.
25. Coleman, Memoirs of Samuel Phelps, p.174.
26. Anderson, An Actor's Life, pp.85-6.
27. William Archer, William Charles Macready. London, 1890. p.115.
28. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.380.
29. Downer, Eminent Tragedian, p.228.
30. Macready, Reminiscences, vol.2, p.446.
31. News and Sunday Herald, January 7th, 1838.
32. George Scharf, Recollections of the Scenic Effects of Covent Garden Theatre. London, 1839.
33. Examiner, October 22nd, 1837, p.679.
34. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.418.
35. John Bull, November 12th, 1837, p.550.
36. John Bull, January 28th, 1838, p.45.

37. Helena Faucit, Lady Martin, Shakespeare's Female Characters. Edinburgh, 1885. p.63.
38. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.438.
39. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.438.
40. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.447.
41. The Times, March 13th, 1838.
42. Archer, William Charles Macready, p.115.
43. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.484.
44. Macready, Diaries, vol.1, p.484.
45. Playbill, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. British Library.
46. Examiner, June 16th, 1839, pp.375-6.
47. Examiner, June 16th, 1839, p.376.
48. Spectator, June 15th, 1839, p.559.
49. Examiner, June 16th, 1839, p.376.
50. Spectator, June 15th, 1839, p.559.
51. Spectator, June 15th, 1839, p.558.
52. Examiner, June 16th, 1839, p.376.
53. John Bull, June 16th, 1839, pp.85-6.
54. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.6.
55. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.5.
56. Lady Pollock, Macready As I Knew Him, pp.83-4.
57. Coleman, Memoirs of Samuel Phelps, p.187.
58. Copy in Folger Shakespeare Library, quoted in Downer, Eminent Tragedian, p.243.
59. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.137.
60. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.138.
61. The London Theatre, 1811-1866, p.91.
62. The London Theatre, 1811-1866, p.91.
63. Bulwer Lytton, England and the English, p.302.

64. J.R. Planché, Recollections and Reflections, vol.1, p.44.

65. Planché, Recollections and Reflections, vol.1, p.251.

66. Charles James Mathews, Life of Charles James Mathews, ed. Charles Dickens. 2 vols. London, 1879. Vol.2, pp.75-76.

67. Life of Charles James Mathews, vol.2, p.76.

68. Athenaeum, September 24th, 1831, p.621.

69. Planché, letter to Mathews, quoted in Life of Charles James Mathews, vol.2, p.377.

70. John Bull, October 13th, 1839, p.489.

71. Planché, Recollections and Reflections, vol.2, p.52.

72. Athenaeum, March 6th, 1841, pp.194-5.

73. Spectator, March 6th, 1841, p.228.

74. Theatrical Observer, April 9th, 1842.

75. John Ruskin, Modern Painters. 5 vols. London, 1873 (new edition). Vol.1, p.120.

76. See P.T. van der Merwe, Clarkson Stanfield 1793-1867, exhibition catalogue. Sunderland, 1979. p.132.

77. Examiner, May 16th, 1841, p.310.

78. Macready, Diaries, vol.2, p.157.

79. Morning Chronicle, February 7th, 1842.

Chapter 8

MUSIC DRAMA AND THE IDEA OF THE NATURAL

There were, broadly, two major impulses available to be explored or exploited in the theatre of the period 1815-1848. The first was the impulse towards realism, often justified by the perceived necessity of being modern. Whether this impulse arose in part because of the rapid developments in scenic representation and in lighting, or whether those developments were themselves responses to the impulse, is unlikely to be resolved. What is certain is that the theatres possessed at last the capacity to create scenes which were acceptable imitations of the real, rather than conventional representations of it. Clearly, not every member of an audience would consistently be convinced of the success of a particular imitation; the prevailing style, though, was to attempt the imitation, whether it was the interior of a contemporary London club in Money, the court of Elsinore in Hamlet with costumes corroborated by the latest historical research, or more spectacular effects such as the destruction of Nineveh in Sardanapalus and the eruption of Vesuvius in (among many other contexts) Masaniello.

In the field of physical settings, there was no limit to what could be imitated on stage: no period of history which archaeology and historical research could not illuminate, no architecture which could not be reproduced by Ciceri, no corner of the world, however wild or remote, which Stanfield's or Roberts's pencil could not evoke at Covent Garden or Drury Lane, often authenticated by sketches made by the artist at the original location. Stage machinery and lighting effects permitted and encouraged the presentation of the supernatural (Faust), the athletic (Amy Robsart's leap to death in Kenilworth), the spectacular (Stanfield's dioramic illustrations to the Chorus of Henry V) and the complex (the four

simultaneous locations of Jonathan Bradford). New works were constructed with an eye to these boundless possibilities, and old works, notably Shakespeare's, were re-interpreted in their light.

Such an increase of emphasis on the visual, and on complementary production elements such as music and sound effects, must have exercised profound influence on acting style. The actor would, to begin with, be placed physically further away from the audience than his eighteenth century predecessor, within the scenery rather than in front of it. This distancing process took place gradually, and erratically, but the eventual outcome was to emphasise the element of bodily gesture and pantomime and to lessen the actor's reliance on the conventional range of vocal gestures. This tendency was encouraged by a number of factors. First, there were the formidable dimensions of many of the major theatres, in conjunction, in London, with noisy and often inattentive audiences. Secondly, the genre of melodrama, in which all the major English actors and at least the French Romantic comédiens were steeped, gave formal expression to the emerging development. Thirdly, the range of parts which an actor was called upon to play increased markedly: the vocal inflections which might have been acceptable for a traditional Coriolanus were demonstrably unsuitable for Claude Melnotte or Evelyn, while Mlle Mars experienced considerable difficulty in achieving the transition from the ingénues of comedy to tragic heroines such as Desdémone or Elvira. It was the simple and the modern which set the norm. The goal was to be natural, which was interpreted as aiming for the behaviour on the stage to be determined largely by the appropriate behaviour of the drawing-room; and if the stage character and the expressed emotion were extravagant or rarefied, then the aim was still to relate them as far as possible to the norms of everyday: "To seize on an emotion, to make it perfectly comprehensible to every capacity, to familiarise the creations of the dramatist to the

spectator, rather than to hold them in a state of august elevation, seems to be his (Macready's) "constant aim".[1] These general tendencies led towards a more naturalistic style of acting (though no doubt one that twentieth century audiences would find histrionic), with an emphasis upon physical detail and significant action, and an increased awareness of the conveyance of meaning by the careful placing of the actor within the total stage picture.

The second impulse is a kind of expressionism. As the stage's limitless potential was discovered, or, more accurately, re-discovered, the more poetic and imaginative writers sensed that it could be used to convey a much more flexible and experimental dramatic experience. In France, landscape began to replace architecture as the dominant background in scenery; and in the freer, more asymmetrical style which Ciceri in particular developed, the spectator's eye was led towards the far distance, where the mind's eye might follow.[2] This impulse was not, in fact, necessarily antithetical to the impulse towards realism: Gothic melodramas in which the supernatural is made convincingly "real" reflect in a popular form the instinct which prompted the experiments in dramatic form of Shelley and Byron. The meeting of the two impulses can be seen in Irving's 1885 production of Goethe's Faust, which omitted the Prelude on the Stage and the Prologue in Heaven, but which created in almost pantomimic detail each bizarre incident in the Witch's Kitchen, and, in the Brocken scene, presented what was "probably the most extraordinary scene of its kind ever performed on the English stage".[3] Accompanying the meticulous reproduction of localised effects were musical forces on a large scale. The orchestra numbered thirty-five or thirty-seven, and the chorus twenty-five: there was a strong affinity, as Michael Booth has stressed, between spectacle drama and grand opera.[4]

It was, indeed, through the medium of music that the theatre was

freed from the constrictions of literal realism, both in the regular forms of opera and ballet, and in a number of semi-dramatic works, of which those of Berlioz are among the most interesting, not least because of their close connections with the regular theatre. Berlioz was one of many in the audience at the Odéon who was overwhelmed by the English theatre's productions of Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet. He became not only obsessed by the image of Harriet Smithson as Ophelia and Juliet, but also moved to respond to the dramatic experience in a number of musical and musico-dramatic works. His description of the experience, though often quoted, is worth repeating as testimony to the power of actual performance to convey poetic impact, even across the barrier of language:

> "I was at the first night of Hamlet. In the role of Ophelia I saw Henriette Smithson, who five years later became my wife. The impression made on my heart and mind by her extraordinary talent, nay her dramatic genius, was equalled only by the havoc wrought in me by the poet she so nobly interpreted. That is all I can say.
>
> Shakespeare, coming upon me unawares, struck me like a thunderbolt. The lightning flash of that discovery revealed to me at a stroke the whole heaven of art, illuminating it to its remotest corners. I recognized the meaning of grandeur, beauty, dramatic truth, and I could measure the utter absurdity of the French view of Shakespeare which derives from Voltaire:
>
> That ape of genius, sent
> By Satan among men to do his work
>
> and the pitiful narrowness of our own worn-out academic, cloistered traditions of poetry. I saw, I understood, I felt...that I was alive and that I must arise and walk."

Four days later Berlioz attended the opening performance of Romeo and Juliet:

> "After the madness and the melancholy of Hamlet, after the pangs of despised love, the heartbreak and bitter irony, the continual brooding on death, the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, after Denmark's dark clouds and icy wind, to steep myself in the fiery sun and balmy nights of Italy, to witness the drama of that immense love, swift as thought,

> burning as lava, radiantly pure as an angel's glance, imperious, irresistible, the raging hatreds, the wild, ecstatic kisses, the desperate strife of love and death contending for mastery - it was too much. By the third act, hardly able to breathe - as though an iron hand gripped me by the heart - I knew that I was lost. I may add that at that time I did not know a word of English; I could only glimpse Shakespeare darkly through the mists of Le Tourneur's translation; the splendour of the poetry which gives a whole new glowing dimension to his glorious works was lost on me. Even now I labour to some extent under this disadvantage. It is much harder for a Frenchman to sound the depths of Shakespeare's style than it is for an Englishman to catch the individual flavour and subtlety of La Fontaine or Molière. They are continents, Shakespeare is a world. But the power of the acting, especially that of Juliet herself, the rapid flow of the scenes, the play of expression and voice and gesture, told me more and gave me a far richer awareness of the ideas and passions of the original than the words of my pale and garbled translation could do."[5]

Berlioz's responses to Shakespeare, and to drama, were vivid, various and enduring. While Shakespearean ideas and images pervade his work as a whole, more direct and transparent connections may be made with, for example, Le roi Lear: grande ouverture (1831), Roméo et Juliette; symphonie dramatique (1839), La mort d'Ophélie: ballade (1842), Marche funèbre pour la dernière scène d'Hamlet (1844), and the more regular adaptation of Béatrice et Bénédict, opéra-comique (1860-62).[6] With the exception of the Lear overture, all these works include sections for a voice or voices, quite apart from the inherently dramatic quality of the music itself. Berlioz's earliest published musical work was semi-dramatic in form: this was Huit scènes de Faust, composed in 1828-29, and first performed in part at the Conservatoire on November 1st, 1829. Berlioz read Faust in Gérard de Nerval's translation during the summer of 1828; the close association of Goethe with Shakespeare in his mind is indicated by a letter to his friend Humbert Ferrand:

> "We will read Hamlet and Faust together. Shakespeare and Goethe! The silent confidants of my torments, they hold the key to my life."[7]

At one point Berlioz hoped to secure a commission to compose a Faust ballet. He later withdrew the published work, but incorporated much of the music into La damnation de Faust: légende dramatique (1845-46), first performed at the Opéra-comique on December 6th, 1846.

Berlioz's first major work was undeniably dramatic, but more personal than literary in its frame of reference, though Shakespeare, Goethe and Beethoven are seldom absent from mind. Berlioz wrote to Ferrand:

> "I suppose that an artist endowed with a vivid imagination, finding himself in that state of mind which Chateaubriand has painted so admirably in René, sees for the first time a woman who is the realisation of beauty and enchantment that his heart has invoked for so long, and falls madly in love with her."[8]

The figure of the artist in the story, he told Ferrand, was a "hero it will not be difficult for you to recognize". The woman was the image of Harriet Smithson as Ophelia and Juliet, represented by a theme, the idée fixe, which provided "dramatic continuity and musical unification at a single stroke". The symphony, described as Episode de la vie d'un artiste and sub-titled Symphonie fantastique, was accompanied by a programme which was distributed at each performance (and whose content was subject to numerous revisions over the years). The programme, and symphony, follows the course of the artist's indefinable longing for an unknown beloved, and the passion which succeeds his first meeting with her (first movement); in the second, he goes to a ball and glimpses her as she waltzes among the dancers; the third movement, which is pastoral, expresses the loneliness of the solitary artist, troubled by thoughts of his beloved; in the fourth, under the influence of opium, he dreams that he has killed her, and is being marched to the public scaffold for execution; in the fifth, the dream becomes even more of a nightmare, and he suffers a Faust-like vision of his beloved at a witches' sabbath. (Fig. 11)

Apart from the musical innovations, and the unusual element of the

programme, the symphony is most remarkable for its intense expression of feeling, an intensity increased because Berlioz's plan "required no sung words to articulate and so diminish the strength of feeling".[9] One might extend the argument and suggest that, although the work powerfully evokes a variety of settings and landscapes, the vividness with which they are created rests on the very absence of precise physical representation. Vigny, who explored in Chatterton some areas of the same ground in the themes of the role of the artist and his inspiration, indicated that his settings should have the simplicity of a Dutch interior, rather than being detailed reproductions of reality. Berlioz, by his chosen form, avoided the restrictions of literal realisation.

The shadow of dramatic form became sharper in the next stage of the Fantastique's development, when it reappeared as, now, simply the first part of Episode de la vie d'un artiste followed by Lélio, or Le rétour à la vie. The two-part work was performed on December 9th and 30th, 1832, (Fig. 67) at the Conservatoire. This extended and re-shaped work contained no newly-composed music, but in the second part the artist of the Fantastique's programme appears on stage in front of a curtain. He explains how he has survived and proceeds to unfold his emotional and artistic course in a series of monologues interspersed with musical episodes, which are played by unseen musicians from behind the curtain. The musical pieces which the artist "hears" illustrate his friendships and longings. They represent, in sequence, his friend Horatio and the song they wrote together, a setting of Goethe's ballad Le pêcheur; a choral setting of the ghost scene from Hamlet (in fact, a version of the Méditation from Berlioz's Cléopâtre of 1829); an invocation to the idealistic life of a brigand; a calmer dream, in which he imagines his own voice singing, Chant de bonheur; and an apparently final sequence in which the artist imagines the wind playing over the graves of himself and

his beloved, the Juliet/Ophelia of his obsession, Les derniers soupirs de la harpe. At this point, he rouses himself from illusion. The curtain is raised. The artist is ready to return to life, and to his music. The orchestra plays the fantasy La tempête (composed in 1830) in which, however, the strains of the idée fixe can be heard at the conclusion.[10]

This extraordinary work was given a concert performance at its première - later, in Germany, it was performed dramatically. The actor chosen to speak the part of the artist was Bocage, Dumas's Antony. The dramatic tension was heightened by the attendance of a great many Romantic poets, artists and musicians, and by that of Harriet Smithson, the idée fixe. Her acknowledged presence lent a special frisson to such passages from the monologues as the following:

> "Oh, if I could only find her, the Juliet, the Ophelia whom my heart cries out for! If I could drink deep of the mingled joy and sadness that real love offers us, and one autumn evening on some wild heath with the north wind blowing over it, lie in her arms and sleep a last, long, sorrowful, sleep!"[11]

This heart-felt expression of the Romantic death-wish was countered, in the context of Lélio, by Berlioz's evocation of Shakespeare's The Tempest, and in his own musical development by, among other dramatic and semi-dramatic works, Benvenuto Cellini, Roméo et Juliette, the grand opera Les Troyens, and Béatrice et Bénédict.

It is significant, but not remarkable, that Berlioz's first ostensibly dramatic work, Benvenuto Cellini, was a failure at its first performances both in Paris in 1838 and in London in 1853, because of its lack of conventionality. The libretto was written by Auguste Barbier and Léon de Wailly, based on a number of unconnected episodes in the life of Cellini which had struck Berlioz's imagination. The language of the libretto was comparatively modern and colloquial: Berlioz's comment that "the crass criticisms provoked among that crowd of illiterates by certain

turns of phrase in a libretto so different in style from the empty, mechanical rhyming prose of the Scribe school"[12] recalls the outrage of the audience in the Théâtre Français at the expressions of Vigny and Hugo. The music, too, was unconventional and difficult; Berlioz was not permitted to conduct, and had to suffer while an unsympathetic Habeneck distorted his rhythms. In addition, following Shakespeare's example, Berlioz had created a "merciless mixture of comic and serious".[13] This kind of truth to nature was especially difficult for audiences to assimilate. Only a director who possessed complete belief in the work's virtues could have saved it, and this was not the case: in the finale

> "where the stage is darkened, representing the Piazza Colonna at night with an immense crowd in masks, the male dancers amused themselves by pinching the female dancers and,when they screamed, screaming too, to the discomfiture of the chorus, who were attempting to sing. When I indignantly appealed to the director to put an end to this insolent and undisciplined behaviour, Duponchel was nowhere to be found: he did not deign to attend rehearsals."[14]

The result was not hard to predict: "The overture was extravagantly applauded; the rest was hissed with exemplary precision and energy." Benvenuto Cellini was withdrawn after three performances. Gautier, in a sympathetic appraisal, compared Berlioz's aims with those of Hugo in drama:

> "A horror of the conventional,of the banal, of facile, small-scale gracefulness, of all concessions to the public, distinguish the musician and the poet alike...each share the same enthusiasm for the dreaming and complex art of Germany and England, and the same disdain for the too naked and plain lines of classical art; they share the same quest for large-scale, violent effects, the same instinct for operating in bulk and for driving numerous ideas in line abreast, like a supremely confident circus rider with the reins of four horses in his hands who never makes an error with horse or harness; it is equally the precise translation of the effects of nature."[15]

Berlioz's work was too complex, startling and unconventional to find an easy welcome at the Opéra, which was as rigidly conservative in many respects as the Théâtre Français. Les Troyens, completed in 1858, was

performed only in part at its première on November 4th, 1863; five months before the opening, the manager of the Théâtre-Lyrique took the decision to present only the last three acts, Les Troyens à Carthage. It was not until the Covent Garden production of 1957 that the work's full scale and qualities were appreciated in a definitive performance. Like Berlioz, Wagner also frequently found his path blocked. In spite of Meyerbeer's recommendation, he was unable to persuade the Paris Opéra to produce Rienzi. Tristan was dropped as impossible after seventy-seven rehearsals at Vienna in 1863. Wagner's final solution was the total control he exercised at the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth.

The theatrical form which responded most supply to the Romantic impulse, both in England and France, was that of ballet. There were two categories of particular note: the grand ballets, such as Masaniello, Kenilworth, and Beniowsky and Le Brigand de Terracina, firmly rooted in historical, or literary/historical settings; and ballets of the supernatural, of which Giselle is the supreme example from a range which includes both La Sylphide and Ondine. The grand ballets featured strong story lines, which would be expressed in mime and decorated, or interspersed, with dances which became increasingly expressive of plot or character. Deshayes, the choreographer at the King's Theatre, was criticised over Faust (1833) on the grounds that his dances bore no relation to the plot; but three years later Beniowsky was praised for its "excellent dancing, not in the mere commonplace manner of ballets as they are usually got up at present, but characteristic and in harmony with the subject".[16]

Deshayes' ballet of Kenilworth contrived to include an astonishing proportion of Scott's narrative because of his reliance on mime; and the three main locations of the three acts - Cumnor, Greenwich and Kenilworth Castle - each with several settings, gave the designer William Grieve ample scope. The visual effects throughout were striking, whether of the

spectacular kind (arrival of the Queen in state barges at Greenwich, Kenilworth Castle by moonlight), the picturesque (Leicester and Elizabeth in the grotto) or the theatrical (Amy Robsart falling to her death through the trap door sprung by Varney). The music, by Costa, was pleasing rather than original - the Athenaeum commented that it was not "strictly speaking ballet-music. It is ridiculous to repeat the same motive or strain to pantomime of different character"[17] - but in terms of the visual constituents, settings, costumes, the groupings and processions, the mime and the dancing, there was scarcely qualified praise. The Athenaeum referred to the enchantment of the audience by Deshayes' realisation of the "romantic situations, and beautifully-contrasted characters of the original". This process was achieved without the handicap of language; and when one examines the text of a successful historical play such as Bulwer-Lytton's Richelieu, with its indigestible mixture of the turgid and the banal, one recognizes the advantage of the ballet form.

Among those actresses who communicated the most potent theatrical images in the Romantic period - Eliza O'Neill, briefly, as Juliet and Belvidera, Maria Malibran as Desdemona, Harriet Smithson, for the French, as Ophelia and Juliet, Marie Dorval in a succession of roles - the most pure and ethereal was Marie Taglioni. Her style, and the contexts in which she was habitually seen, make an illuminating contrast with the emphases on the simple and domestic which were associated with an actress such as Helen Faucit. From the time of her début in London (in Didelot's Flore et Zéphire, June 3rd 1830), the classic simplicity of Taglioni's dancing was widely recognized: "she appears to be the Grecian statue animated, and preserving in every movement the purity and delicacy of her first existence. She is all grace. The most rapid execution is accompanied with an inconceivable softness; and exertions which in others are marked by violence, seem to spring from her nature with perfect ease."[18]

As La Sylphide, first seen at Covent Garden on July 26th 1832, she exhausted the critics' vocabularies. The word which recurs is poetic: she was "all that the most poetical imagination could picture of sylph-like airiness, scarcely palpable, it might be conceived, to human touch"[19]; for another critic, she raised dancing to "an art worthy to rank with poetry and painting".[20] It is evident that she was an excellent dancer, technically, and by no means restricted to sylph or spirit roles; in La Gitana, she displayed in a mazurka and a cachucha the fire and energy of Fanny Elssler. But her greatest quality was to project an imaginative concept through her movements, so that the physical was always in the service of a poetic idea. As the Times wrote of a revival of La Sylphide, compressed by Perrot into one act, "The dancing is not the spontaneous mirthful joyousness of 'realism', does not exhibit a wild abandon, but it is the calm, graceful exhibition of a poetical conception. It is the elevation of every gesture into an ethereal region that stamps Taglioni as the 'idealist' par excellence."[21]

In terms of dramatic power, Fanny Elssler was Taglioni's complement. She made her début in London in La Fée et le Chevalier (July 11th, 1833), but after two seasons was not seen there again until 1838, during which interval her dramatic skill had matured, as had her technical ability, particularly in the spirited interpretation of national dances. These two facets were seen to advantage in Le Diable boiteux (1838) and in La Gipsy (1839). Fanny Elssler was able to unite mime and dance into one coherent expression of character. "Her pas are themselves fine specimens of acting. They are not unmeaning things, stopping the course of the drama when the actress abandons the character and appears to audiences as the professed danseuse, but Fanny Elssler gives them a life and a signification which belong to the impassioned girl of the piece, and the whole is one beautiful creation progressively developed."[22] A point of contact with dramatic

technique is established by Gautier, commenting on the scene where Sarah (in La Gipsy) is falsely accused of theft and brought before the Sheriff, as played by Elssler in the Paris production. As Sarah, Elssler rose to "the most sublime heights of tragedy...Noble pride in innocence, energy, tears, grief, love, intoxicating joy - she runs through the whole gamut of human emotions. Only Miss Smithson or Mlle Dorval could have attained such transports of pathos, such forceful miming."[23]

The ability to convey character, and subtle gradations of emotion, was something Fanny Elssler shared with Carlotta Grisi, and which each of them was able to display supremely in two masterpieces of the Romantic ballet, Giselle and La Esmeralda. While Giselle is, arguably, the more potent example of Romanticism, La Esmeralda has particular interest for this study in being conceived and created for the English stage. Hugo's novel Notre Dame de Paris was published in 1831, and had formed the basis of two operas, and a ballet (by Monticini, at La Scala in 1839; but Monticini's was a ballet in the Italian style, with the main roles being taken by mimes, and the principal dancer, Cerrito, appearing only in the dances which were separate and decorative). The idea for a full-length ballet on the subject was Benjamin Lumley's, the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre in succession to Laporte. Perrot, the choreographer, was initially hesitant, but further argument from Lumley encouraged him to develop a scenario, and Cesare Pugni was engaged to compose a score, working in collaboration with Perrot. The ballet was first projected for the 1843 season, but an injury to Perrot caused its postponement, and it was retained for the following year with Carlotta Grisi in the title role.[24]

Perrot's scenario inevitably simplified the plot of Hugo's novel; it might also be accused of distorting it, since it substituted a happy ending for Hugo's grotesque and painful final sequence, and in general softened the tone - the character of Phoebus, for example, approached that

of the conventional hero. At the same time, much of the original's vigour and density was retained; its extraordinary range of types and characters was reflected; and a sense of both the story's complexity, and its abrupt transitions of emotion, was conveyed by Perrot in a unified and well-balanced scenario. The Times called it "A perfect model of ballet building. Never did we see those parts of a long story that might be dramatically effective selected and arranged with such skill as in this new ballet."[25] The five scenes of the ballet were so arranged that the second and fourth, Esmeralda's lodging and a cabaret, could be played in front of a drop-curtain, allowing the third - the garden where the wedding festivities of Phoebus and Fleur-de-lys take place - and the fifth - the prison - to be set during their playing: the effect was to increase the ballet's dramatic power. While the story possessed an intense focus in the person of Esmeralda, danced during that first season by both Carlotta Grisi and Fanny Elssler, interest was sustained by the number of striking character parts: Pierre Gringoire, the poet (danced by Perrot); the sinister priest Claude Frollo (Gosselin); Quasimodo (Coulon); Phoebus (Saint-Léon); Fleur-de-lys (Adelaide Frassi). The corps de ballet, too, was fully integrated into the action, especially in the energetic realism of the opening scene of the Cour des Miracles, and in the procession of the Fools' Pope at the close.

The achievement of the production was immense. At a time when serious drama was scarcely to be seen on the London stage - Phelps's venture at Sadlers Wells was still in its first tentative season - Perrot's ballet embraced all the virtues of Macready's or Madame Vestris's best productions with none of their shortcomings. The mid-Victorian stage functioned best when able to concentrate on illustration; its weakness was revealed when attempting to create a convincing relationship between illustration and a spoken text, a relationship which continually raised questions of realism,

and only seldom answered them. The spoken word, and the gestures and behaviour accompanying it, aroused expectations about the ideal of holding a mirror up to nature which were hard to satisfy in the conditions of the contemporary stage. One play which arguably succeeded was Bulwer Lytton's comedy Money; and it is significant that it was presented in a relatively small theatre, the Haymarket, and that it imitated with painstaking, almost documentary, fidelity the conversation and manners of a highly restricted segment of society. When freed from the onus of representing reality in a literal way, as in ballet or music drama, a choreographer such as Perrot, working in conjunction with scenic designers of the quality of Grieve or Marshall, actresses such as Elssler and Grisi, and a corps de ballet trained technically in a way that the acting stage, in England at least, could not begin to match, was able to create theatre of infinitely greater sensitivity and flexibility.

Giselle is the only Romantic ballet to have remained in the repertory largely in its original form. Its genesis arose from a chance moment when Gautier's imagination was struck by a passage in Heine's De l'Allemagne, where he mentioned "des wilis au teint de neige, à la valse impitoyable..." "I exclaimed involuntarily: 'What a marvellous ballet one could make of that!' I even seized, in a burst of enthusiasm, a handsome sheet of white paper, and wrote at its head, in a beautiful, well-rounded hand, Les Wilis, a ballet."[26] At the Opéra, later that evening, Gautier consulted Saint-Georges about his idea; in three days, Saint-Georges had produced a draft scenario. Saint-Georges possessed the experience in the genre that Gautier at this point lacked, having been responsible for the recent successes of La Gipsy (1839) and Le Diable amoureux (1840). Gautier admitted that he himself had envisaged the relatively restricted scheme of a dramatisation based on Fantômes, Hugo's poem from the collection Les Orientales, whose subject is a young Spanish girl who lives only for

(fig. 66)

dancing and who dies at dawn after a ball:

> "Elle aimait trop le bal, c'est ce qui l'a tuée,
> Le bal éblouissant! le bal délicieux!"[27]

Saint-Georges's scenario for Act 1 was considerably more elaborate, and Gautier acknowledged its dramatic effectiveness. The final scenario was included by Gautier in his published dramatic works, though he never failed to pay tribute to Saint-Georges's major contribution. His own name had been suppressed from the playbills on the first night, on the advice of others, but was subsequently added to that of Saint-Georges.

The score was composed by Adolphe Adam, within a week; apart from some sections from his earlier Faust (1833), the music was original. The choreography was by Jean Coralli, though the detailed choreography for the role of Giselle, danced by Carlotta Grisi, was the work of her husband Jules Perrot. The sets were designed by Ciceri, and the costumes by Lormier. Much of the ballet's success can be attributed to the close collaboration between the principal creators. Apart from the good relationship between Gautier and Saint-Georges, Adam was a friend of Perrot and Carlotta Grisi; while both Adam and Gautier attended rehearsals. It was Adam, in fact, who provided the ballet's ending, suggesting that Giselle should be carried by Albrecht to the bank of flowers beneath which she sinks, rather than return to her tomb. The ballet was also rehearsed with care and meticulous attention to detail. It contained a number of complicated lighting and stage effects, and the first night was postponed to enable these to be practised and adjusted. They included Giselle rising by means of a trap from her tomb; a flight across the stage; an effect achieved by a kind of see-saw in which Giselle appeared to float downwards from the branch of a tree to scatter flowers at the feet of her lover Albrecht; and the final sinking beneath the bank of flowers. This last moment was preceded by a much admired sunrise effect.[28]

The ballet encapsulates two Romantic landscapes: the first act's

setting is in a rustic countryside framed by the cottage of Giselle's family on the left and the distant castle representing the world of Albrecht's fiancée Bathilde on the right, a comic world bright with local colour; the second act takes place at midnight, by a forest lake, where the wilis gather at the command of their Queen, to be joined by Giselle, a darker landscape with connotations of the world of dream. The first act is largely familiar and conventional, containing characters reminiscent of other genres, including melodrama. Adam himself recognized that the first act was the less strong, a criticism which he extended to Ciceri's setting. (Fig.73) "Ciceri's first set is not good, his backcloth represents one of those rocks surmounted by a strong castle and having at the foot numerous vineyards such as one sees in Germany, but all is weak and pale." But the mood of the second act moved from the conventionally picturesque and charming to the more potent motifs of the Romantic imagination, a shift reflected in the set-design: "On the other hand, his second act is a delight, (Fig.74) a dark and humid forest filled with bulrushes and wild flowers: then there is a sunrise which is first seen through the trees at the end of the piece and which is of a magical effect."[29] It is a setting which exemplifies the evanescent quality of Giselle, poised between life and death, sanity and madness, and which serves to define one Romantic concept of love, as being of too fine and ephemeral a nature to be grasped as anything but an idea. In part, it can be seen as the Romantic response to the Shakespeare of A Midsummer Night's Dream, of the mad Ophelia, of the balcony and tomb scenes of Romeo and Juliet. It was a response which avoided words, relying on music, colour, shape, gesture and movement. The ballet was strongly, and attractively, cast throughout; only the prettiest dancers were admitted to the corps de ballet: "The almost pretty were pitilessly turned away. It was done with great severity."[30] In the major roles, Lucien Petipa was "charming both as dancer and actor," and

"rehabilitated male dancing which had been so truly buried by female dancing." Adèle Dumilâtre, as the Queen of the Wilis, "deserved the success she obtained by the correctness and the 'mythological' quality of her poses".[31] As Giselle, Carlotta Grisi enjoyed a major triumph, which established her as the successor to Marie Taglioni and Fanny Elssler. Gautier, who was placed in the difficult position of reviewing his own work and compromised in the shape of a letter to Heine, wrote that Carlotta Grisi "danced with a perfection, a lightness, a boldness, a chaste and delicate passion which place her in the first rank between Elssler and Taglioni; in her pantomime, she surpassed all our hopes; not one conventional gesture, not one false movement; she is nature and artlessness personified..."

Carlotta Grisi represented "nature and artlessness personified" in the least realistic form of drama, ballet. For the following season, Saint-Georges adapted a melodrama, Victorine, ou la Nuit porte conseil, which became La Rosière de Gand; in 1843, Grisi appeared in another Gautier scenario, La Péri, a version of his story La Mille et deuxième nuit. While dancers of the quality of Taglioni, Elssler and Grisi were available, it was logical to create poetic drama in terms of movement, music and those visual elements which the theatre of the mid-nineteenth-century theatre was well equipped to provide. Giselle, having its genesis in a poet's chance reaction to some phrases of another, represents one end of the scale so far as music drama is concerned; Les Troyens represents the other.

During the Romantic period, it is evident that many of the most demanding dramatic works, both those written contemporaneously and those of earlier eras which the Romantics regarded as models, found their most appropriate and imaginative expression in the form of opera. Scott's importance as a source for Italian opera is incontrovertible. Donizetti's version of Marino Faliero is an interesting example of Byron's influence;

it is based directly in terms of plot and characterisation on Delavigne's adaptation, which is itself more an adaptation or embellishment of Byron's play than a wholly independent treatment: the strength of the cast for the English première at Her Majesty's theatre, which included Lablache as Faliero, Giulia Grisi as Elena, Rubini as Fernando, Tamburini as Ismaele, and Ivanoff as the gondolier, could hardly be matched in quality by the "legitimate" or non-musical theatre. Verdi's "Argumenti d'opere" of March, 1844, in which he listed those works which he contemplated as sources for future operas, included Shakespeare's King Lear, Hamlet and The Tempest; Hugo's Le Roi s'amuse, Marion Delorme and Ruy Blas; Dumas's Kean, Grillparzer's Die Ahnfrau and Byron's Cain. During his Byronic period, Verdi transformed both The Corsair and The Two Foscari into operas. The medium of music, and the singing rather than the speaking voice, provided a vehicle for poetic content which partly overcame the restricting conventions and conditions of the contemporary theatre. Ballet supremely, but opera to a large extent, harnessed the physical resources of the theatre in ways that were denied to the drama of the spoken word.

CHAPTER 8 : NOTES

1. Spectator, January 27th, 1838, p.88.
2. See especially the chapter "Ciceri et la Décoration Théâtrale", Allevy, La mise en scène en France, pp.51-61.
3. Michael Booth, Victorian Spectacular Theatre, 1850-1910. London, 1981. p.120.
4. Booth, Victorian Spectacular Theatre, p.97.
5. The Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns. London, 1970. pp.109, 111-2.
6. See Hugh Macdonald, Berlioz, London, 1982.
7. Hector Berlioz, letter to Humbert Ferrand, September 16th, 1828, in Correspondance Générale, ed. Pierre Citron. Paris, 1972. 4 vols. to date. Vol.1, p.208.
8. Berlioz, letter to Ferrand, April 16th, 1830 in Correspondance Générale, Vol.1, p.319.
9. Macdonald, Berlioz, p.90.
10. Macdonald, Berlioz, p.90.
11. Quoted from Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns, p.260.
12. Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns, pp.293-4.
13. Macdonald, Berlioz, p.111.
14. Memoirs of Berlioz, translated by David Cairns, p.296.
15. Gautier, L'Art Dramatique en France depuis vingt-cinq ans. Vol.1, pp.172-3.
16. The Times, May 6th, 1836.
17. Athenaeum, March 5th, 1831, p.157.
18. Morning Herald, June 4th, 1830.
19. Morning Post, July 31st, 1832.
20. The Times, July 27th, 1832.

21. The Times, June 27th, 1845.

22. The Times, March 9th, 1840.

23. La Presse, February 4th, 1839.

24. See Benjamin Lumley, Reminiscences of the Opera. London, 1864.

25. The Times, February 19th, 1845.

26. La Presse, July 5th, 1841.

27. Victor Hugo, Fantômes, in the collection Orientales, Oeuvres Complètes, vol.3, p.586.

28. See Ivor Guest, The Romantic Ballet in Paris. London, 1966. Chapter 8, "The Rising Star of Carlotta Grisi", includes a detailed commentary on the first production of Giselle.

29. Translation by Ivor Guest, The Romantic Ballet in Paris, pp.208-9.

30. La Presse, May 17th, 1841.

31. Guest, The Romantic Ballet in Paris, p.208.

32. La Presse, July 5th, 1841.

CONCLUSION

The drama of England and France during the period under review was most assured when it contained a strong musical and visual emphasis, either in the form of melodrama, where this emphasis is self-evident and almost self-defining, or in the growing stress on the spectacular and grandiose. In the non-musical theatre, there were steady accretions of physical clutter, whether in the form of costume, scenery, properties, invented "business", or simply the large number of supernumerary actors. Such manifestations were initially demanded in order to impress an audience with the authenticity of the theatre's imitation of nature; increasingly, they seemed to be used merely to impress. These accretions made the ideal of the natural, the quest so enthusiastically entered upon at the start of the period, harder to achieve. Either the Simple became smothered by the Magnificent, or it became necessary to separate the two. A spectator was offered either a photographic imitation of modern life and manners, or a highly charged series of images expressed through visual and musical means, "high art" in the forms of opera and ballet, "low art" in the form of melodrama.

In England, the dilemma is most clearly illustrated in the attempts to present the poetic drama of Shakespeare. Macready's misgivings about the illustrative excesses of Charles Kean have been quoted above: "the public is willing to have the magnificence without the tragedy, and the poet is swallowed up in display."[1] Edward Gordon Craig, in attempting to define the development of English theatre in the second half of the nineteenth century, comments on the phenomenon from a different perspective in On the Art of the Theatre. His example comes in the section entitled The Artists of the Theatre of the Future, and Craig introduces it with the comment that his attempt, as a boy of twenty-one, to "produce designs traditional in

character without feeling at all in sympathy with the tradition" was so much wasted time.

> "I remember making designs for scenes for Henry IV. I was working under an actor-manager at the time. I was working in a theatre where the chairs and the tables and other matters of detail played over-important and photographic parts, and, not knowing any better, I had to take all this as a good example. The play of Henry IV, therefore, consisted to my mind of one excellent part, Prince Hal, and thirty or forty other characters that trotted round this part. There was the usual table with the chairs round it on the right side. There at the back was the usual door, and I thought it rather unique and daring at the time to place this door a little bit off the straight. There was the window with the latches and the bolts and the curtains ruffled up to look as if they had been used for some time, and outside the glimpses of English landscape. There were the great flagons; and, of course, on the curtain rising there was to be a great cluster and fluster of 'scurvy knaves,' who ran in and out, and a noise of jovial drinkers in the next room. There was the little piece of jovial music to take up the curtain, that swinging jig tune which we have all grown so familiar with, there were the three girls who pass at the back of the window, laughing. One pops her head in at the window with a laugh and a word to the potman. Then there is the dwindling of the laughter and the sinking to piano of the orchestra as the first speaking character enters, and so on.
>
> My whole work of that time was based on these stupid restless details which I had been led to suppose a production could be made from; and it was only when I banished the whole of this from my thoughts, and no longer permitted myself to see with the eyes of the producers of the period of Charles Kean, that I began to find anything fresh which might be of value to the play."[2]

Craig, with intimate knowledge and an amused affection, is looking back on the false idea of the natural which had been nurtured by the great actor-managers, themselves building on ideas and approaches fostered by Macready. The significant detail or gesture which once was used to give life and point to a moment or image, had become a continuous succession of "stupid restless details" which only obscured the broad sweeps of thought. The same kind of criticism lies behind Craig's strictures on actors, to whom he points out the loopholes through which they may escape from bondage:

> "They must create for themselves a new form of acting, consisting for the main part of symbolical gesture. To-day they impersonate and interpret; to-morrow they must represent and interpret; and the third day they must create. By this means style may return. To-day the actor impersonates a certain being. He cries to the audience: 'Watch me; I am now pretending to be so and so.'"[3]

Craig deplored the attempt to imitate life: "while impersonation is in the Theatre, the Theatre can never become free." It was the same both in design and acting:

> "The Kembles and their grand artificiality had to make room for Edmund Kean, who in thirty years from then was looked on as anything but natural, for was not Macready 'more natural'? And in a few years' time all of these actors seemed to us stilted and artificial when Henry Irving appeared. And now we talk of Irving's artificiality by the side of Antoine's natural acting. 'It is Nature itself,' cry the critics, and soon Antoine's natural acting is to become mere artifice by the side of the acting of Stanislawsky.
>
> What,then, are all these manifestations of this 'Nature'?
>
> I find them one and all to be merely examples of a new artificiality - the artificiality of naturalism."[4]

It is interesting to set beside this argument of Craig the passage from Sir Joshua Reynolds, quoted in part in Chapter 1, and cited by James Boaden in his life of Kemble:

> "He who thinks nature, in the narrow sense of the word, is alone to be followed, will produce but a scanty entertainment for the imagination."

Boaden commented; "The actor who looks no farther than common nature for the expression of the passions, will be short of the true mark."[5]

"Common nature" is where the majority of actors in the Romantic age looked, and where the majority of theatre managers, and scene-painters, encouraged them to look. "Common nature" is the domestic touch of Macready taken as a fundamental principle. On the large scale, it demands forty senators to be present in the Hall of Doges in Othello; on the small, for Mlle Mars as Desdémone to undress before retiring to bed.

Craig, extending his discussion of photographic acting, comments:

> "There is a strange expression of the actor 'getting under the skin of the part'. A better one would be getting 'out of the skin of the part altogether'."[6]

Throughout the nineteenth century, from Talma onwards, actors strove to impersonate the character. Craig's concept of the Über-marionette, so distinctive a landmark for the twentieth century in the successive attempts to free theatre from the deadening influences of realism, recalls Goethe, who, in his later years at Weimar, expressed an urgent demand for a more mechanical style of acting in his Rules for Actors. Once photographic realism could become, at least for a time, the preserve of film, the theatre was free in theory to pursue again an idea of the natural which the literalism of the nineteenth century had almost obscured. The ideal of impersonation, the convincing of the members of an audience that they were seeing the real, was effective in terms of acting only in the limited context and restricted scale of modern comedy; the conditions and furnishings of the drawing-room could be as successfully recreated in the theatre as the speech and manners of its inhabitants, and the conventions of the theatrical overcome. But in other genres, the overly theatrical impulse, which Talma and Macready sought to control, emerged as more dominant than ever. Dumas's reaction to the Shakespearean experience of 1827, "It was men of the theatre forgetting that they were on a stage",[7] remained an elusive ideal. Paradoxically, it seemed capable of achievement either when the theatrical context was most conspicuous, in opera or ballet, or when it appeared at its most exiguous, as in the performances of Rachel in London, or those of Harriet Smithson and Helen Faucit in Paris. The idea which emerged most powerfully from the period's experiments was the essential theatricality of the stage, an idea whose recognition ultimately freed the theatre from the constraints of false convention. Above all, there was the explicit recognition that the theatre's language consisted of more than words, and the increasingly effective deployment of those non-verbal elements.

CONCLUSION : NOTES

1. Macready, Reminiscences, vol.2, p.446.
2. Edward Gordon Craig, On the Art of the Theatre. London, 1924. pp.28-9.
3. Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p.61.
4. Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p.290.
5. Boaden, Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble Esq. Vol.1, p.173.
6. Craig, On the Art of the Theatre, p.63.
7. Dumas, Théâtre Complet, vol.1, p.48.

Notes on the Illustrations

The order of the illustrations is broadly chronological. The eight sections relate to the eight chapters of the dissertation, but many of the items have a general significance, and for this reason I have not cross-referenced them to a particular passage in the text.

Section 1

Fig.1 Miss Fanny Kelly as Annette in The Maid and the Magpie, (Lyceum Theatre, August 28th, 1815): an early example of a tinsel picture. The figure of Annette is placed between the farm and the church, a setting reminiscent of a scenic backdrop; her innocence is emphasised by the basket of flowers, a motif echoed in her hat and in the decoration of her dress, and by the crucifix around her neck. The spoon and fork which caused all the trouble are prominent. The subject, if not the style, is one of natural simplicity.

Fig.2 Edmund Kean as Othello. The toy-theatre prints, like the tinsel picture of Miss Kelly, accentuate the popular features of performance. Othello's "subversive" dagger, in Delacroix's phrase, dominates; indeed, all the physical details are prominent, whether objects (like the lamp) or decoration. Like the Moorish ear-rings and the Venetian lion motif on Othello's tunic. The affinities with melodrama are self-evident.

Fig.3 William Macready as Virginius, in the play by Sheridan Knowles. (Engraving by T. Hollis after a painting by J. Tracey, 1850.) This austere pose of Macready, and his expression of stern dignity,

expresses clearly the actor's studied control and essential seriousness of purpose. It belongs within the tradition of J.P. Kemble, and suggests the classical context in which Macready's use of the natural,domestic, colloquial touch could make a strong impact.

Figs.4-6 Costume designs for Othello, Cassio and Desdemona by J.R. Planché for the Covent Garden production of 1825. There was significant progress towards a unified concept of design at Covent Garden in the 1820s, which corresponded to the emphasis on the natural in acting style. J.R. Planché was responsible for greater accuracy, consistency and appropriateness in costume, and he published the "Costume of Shakespeare's Historical Tragedy of King John, selected and arranged from the best authorities. Expressly for the proprietors of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden in 1823." This was followed by volumes on Henry IV Parts 1 and 2 (1824), As You Like It, Hamlet, and Othello and the Merchant of Venice (1825). The main thrust of the designs is towards historical accuracy, though Planché makes somewhat grudging concessions towards theatrical practice and necessity. He comments, for instance, that "It is unfortunate that there is an imperious necessity for Hamlet's being in black,as it happens that he is, probably, (with the exception of the King and Queen) the only person who should not wear it. In the first place, the ancient Danes never mourned for the death of their dearest relatives,..." In connection with Othello, Planché claims that there was a specific costume for the Venetian general, which Othello would have assumed on the day of his election, and suggests the character should adopt this on his appointment to the Cyprus

command. However, he concedes that most actors prefer a Moorish costume.

It is useful to compare these costume designs with those of Kemble as Othello and Abbott as Cassio (Paris, Théâtre Anglais, 1827, Figs.37 and 38), which reflect Covent Garden tradition.

Figs.7-11 The following five illustrations come from the Grieve collection, University of London Library. John Henderson Grieve (1770-1845) is identified as working as a scene-painter at Covent Garden in 1794; he was joined there by his sons Thomas (1817) and William (1819). As a trio,they were responsible for the greater part of the scene designs at Covent Garden during the 1820s and, more intermittently, the 1830s. Many of the seven hundred or so design sketches in the Grieve collection are unidentified; nor is it certain that all were executed. The collection is, nevertheless, a most important resource for understanding the visual dimension in the theatre of the time.

William Grieve, who excelled in moonlight scenes, was responsible for the scene-painting at the King's Theatre under Laporte. His brother Thomas had an exceptionally long career which continued at Drury Lane, and at the Princess' Theatre under Charles Kean.

Fig.7 Scene design for Hotspur's camp, Henry IV Part 1, Covent Garden, 1824, Grieve family. This is the production for which Planché provided the costume designs.

Fig.8 Scene design for Cymbeline, Covent Garden, 1827, Grieve family. This and the previous design indicate the increasingly detailed

and thoughtful quality of the scenic elements of production, and offer some justification for the high value placed upon the purely visual dimension of theatre-going.

Figs.9-11 Figures 9 and 10, unidentified, may be taken as contrasting manifestations of the Magnificent, expressed by natural and architectural grandeur. The first seems a suitable setting for a melodrama, the second for an opera. Figure 11 is a reflection of the Simple, and bears a clear relationship to genre painting. It could be a setting for a domestic melodrama.

Section 2

Fig.12 Mme Dorval as Cécilia and T.P. Cooke, imported from England, as the mute monster in Le Monstre et le Magicien at the Porte-Saint-Martin, 1826.

Fig.13 Frédérick Lemaître as Mephistopheles in the demonic waltz from Faust, Porte-Saint-Martin, 1828. This and the previous illustration emphasise the background of melodrama and popular theatre of the two leading interpreters of French Romantic drama.

Fig.14 Design by Ciceri for Act One of Bertram, the adaptation of Maturin by Taylor and Nodier at the Panorama Dramatique, 1821.

Fig.15 Talma as.Néron in Racine's Britannicus, painting by Delacroix.

Fig.16 Frédérick Lemaître as Robert Macaire in L'Auberge des Adrets, lithograph by Langlumé. This and the previous image point to the two stylistic extremes within the French theatre, the dignified

power of the classical tradition, and the sardonic energy of the boulevard theatres.

Section 3

Figs. 17-22 Sketches and scene designs by William Grieve, for the ballet Kenilworth, choreography by Deshayes, first produced at the King's Theatre by Laporte in 1831. (Grieve collection, University of London Library.) The Examiner (March 6th, 1831) commented: "There is much good scenery, striking pageantry and some extremely beautiful dances."

Fig.17 Cumnor Place, scene design.

Fig.18 Mortimer's Tower, scene design.

Fig.19 Kenilworth, moonlight, sketch.

Fig.20 Kenilworth, moonlight, scene design.

Fig.21 Greenwich Palace, sketch. "The details have also some faults: the painted boats and crews at Greenwich are too like paste-board toys; Vauxhall lamps and rockets seem out of time and place in the gardens of Kenilworth." (Examiner, March 6th, 1831)

Fig.22 The Grotto, sketch.

Fig.23 Scene design for the Hall of Arimanes by the Grieve family, Act Two, scene four, Byron's Manfred, Drury Lane, 1834.

Section 4

Fig.24 Frontispiece to Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris, text by F.J. Moreau, lithographs by Achille Devéria and Louis Boulanger (Paris, 1827). This sardonic illustration features the lawyer Briefwit, from the farce The Weathercock, whose only remark is an often repeated "good", a word that was recognized by the whole audience, and which became a catchphrase in Paris. Briefwit was played by Stephen Bennett, the smallest actor on the English stage. The lithograph offers an interesting perspective on the scene in Othello which troubled French taste more than any other within the Shakespearean repertory.

Fig.25 Stage plan for Hamlet, Act Three scene one, John Philip Kemble Promptbooks, vol.2. The stage arrangement agrees in all major respects both with the Devéria lithograph (Fig.26) and with the Scharf record of Macready's 1837 Covent Garden production (Fig.57).

Fig.26 This sketch is reproduced from Delécluze's journal by kind permission of Mme Viollet-le-Duc. The disposition of the principal characters follows that of the prompt-book, and coincides with the "souvenir" of the lithograph by Devéria and Boulanger. The writing identifies "Ophelia", "Hamlet", "le petit théâtre", "La Reine" and "Le Roi". Apart from the position of the fan, Hamlet's posture is strikingly similar to that depicted in the lithograph.

Fig.27 The Mousetrap scene, Hamlet, Charles Kemble as Hamlet, Harriet Smithson as Ophelia, lithograph by A. Devéria and L. Boulanger from Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris. This illustration confirms the stage tradition of the Kemble prompt-book, as well as

the indecorous position of Hamlet and his use of Ophelia's fan.

Fig.28 The Mousetrap scene, Hamlet, lithograph by Delacroix, 1835. Although Delacroix retains a number of references to stage performance - the portrait round Hamlet's neck, his use of Ophelia's fan - the lithograph is clearly an interpretation rather than a "souvenir" of a particular production.

Fig.29 Harriet Smithson as Ophelia, Hamlet, Act Four scene five, Devéria and Boulanger, Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris. Note the straws, and the veil which Ophelia mistakes for Polonius' shroud.

Fig.30 The mad Ophelia, lithograph by Delacroix, 1834. As with Fig.27, Delacroix's fluent image is based on theatrical practice, and seems to reflect the detailed descriptions of the graceful pantomime of the English acting tradition.

Fig.31 An idealized portrait of Harriet Smithson as Ophelia, hand-coloured lithograph by A. de Valmont, 1827.

Fig.32 Groundplan of Cherry's The Soldier's Daughter, as recorded by the Dutch actor Johannes Jelgerhuis after attending a performance in Amsterdam on May 31st, 1814. See Ben Albach, "A Dutch Actor's Experiences with English Theatre in Amsterdam, May-July 1814", Western Popular Theatre, ed. D. Mayer and K. Richards, pp.75-90.

Figs. 33-36 These are four of the five Romeo and Juliet scenes illustrated by Devéria and Boulanger in Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris (the one omitted is of Romeo in despair at Friar Laurence's cell).

Fig.33 Although labelled 'Acte 3 scene 5', this is in fact from Act Two, and pictures Charles Kemble as Romeo and Harriet Smithson as Juliet in the first balcony scene.

Fig.34 Juliet and the Nurse in a pose, according to Moreau, "consacrée à la scène anglaise par une heureuse tradition". It clearly foreshadows that of the Tomb scene (Fig.35).

Fig.35 Romeo parting from Juliet, Act Three scene five. The setting of this scene disappointed the French critics, in that it made no use of the two stage levels indicated by Shakespeare. There is in fact a water-colour sketch by Devéria depicting this scene, with a rope-ladder visible, in which Romeo kisses Juliet passionately while the Nurse in the background points to the lightening sky.

Fig.36 The death scene in the tomb. "Il est impossible de pousser plus loin que les acteurs anglais l'imitation de l'agonie et de l'espèce de convulsion qui précède la mort." (Moreau)

Fig.37 Charles Kemble as Romeo, Harriet Smithson as Juliet, lithograph by Francis, 1827. In the adaptation which Garrick established on the English stage, Juliet revived after Romeo had drunk the poison but before it began to take effect. The sensational choice of subject by Francis emphasises those features of English acting which most seized the imagination of the French spectators.

Fig.38 Charles Kemble as Othello, lithograph by A. de Valmont, 1827.

Fig.39 William Abbott as Cassio, lithograph by A. de Valmont, 1827. These two costumes reflect the style, if not the precise details, of the Planché designs of 1825 (Figs.4 and 5).

Fig.40 Harriet Smithson as Desdemona, Charles Kemble as Othello, Othello, Act Five scene two, Devéria and Boulanger, Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris. The fatal moment of violence so provocative to the French: Desdemona's plight is emphasised by her naked shoulder, breast and leg, even though the drawing strikes one as anatomically impossible. This pose is a signal instance of the violent action contained within Shakespeare which was so powerful a stimulus to the French Romantic dramatists and actors.

Section 5

Fig.41 Harriet Smithson in Jane Shore, Act Five scene three, Devéria and Boulanger, Souvenirs du Théâtre Anglais à Paris. Act Five begins with Jane Shore fainting, and exclaiming "I have not eat these three days", one of the simply expressed moments of pathos which invariably evoked tears from the French audiences. The strength of the pantomime is marked: the image scarcely needs the accompaniment of language.

Fig.42 Costume of Mlle Mars as la Duchesse de la Guise in Henri III et sa Cour (Théâtre Français, 1829). The seriousness of this pose, and the historical accuracy of the design, makes a revealing contrast with the illustration of mars as Célimène (Fig.48).

Fig.43 Ciceri's design for Delavigne's Marino Faliero (Porte-Saint-Martin, 1829) Act Three, showing clearly the church of San

Giovanni e San Paolo, the equestrian statue, and the canal of Byron's stage-direction, with the Delavigne addition of the madone.

Fig.44 Othello and Desdemona, painting by Delacroix, 1847-8. Behind this painting lie a number of stage traditions, notably Othello's lamp and sword (see Fig.2, depicting Kean), and, perhaps, the bed-curtains which Macready, but not Charles Kemble, used in order to conceal the murder of Desdemona, both in 1828 with Harriet Smithson and again in 1844 with Helen Faucit. The harp is an echo from Rossini's Otello, which incorporated the willow song customarily omitted in contemporary English stage practice.

Fig.45 Ciceri's design for the palace in La Muette de Portici at the Opéra, 1828. The smoking Vesuvius, a force of nature, contrasts sharply with the severely classical architectural foreground.

Fig.46 Bocage in Dumas' Antony (Porte-Saint-Martin, 1831). Note Dumas' comments: "although Antony was clad like an ordinary mortal, in a cravat, frock-coat, waistcoat and trousers, there had to be, on account of the eccentricity of the character, something peculiar in the set of the cravat and shape of the waistcoat, in the cut of the coat and trousers." (Mémoires, vol.4, p.293)

Fig.47 The final curtain-line of Antony: "Elle me résistait: je l'ai assassiné." Dumas' variation on an image from Othello, lithograph by A. Johannot.

Fig.48 Marie Dorval, as Adèle, in Antony, in which she was able to portray

the suffering of a woman torn between marital virtue and the promptings of passion, a rôle she was to echo mutedly as Kitty Bell in Chatterton.

Section 6

Fig.49 Mlle Mars as Célimène in Molière's Le Misanthrope: the kind of rôle which Mlle Mars excelled in, the epitome of natural elegance, with the costume reflecting the fashion of the day.

Fig.50 Design for His First Campaign by Planché at Covent Garden, 1832 (family Grieve). A visually fluent relic of Laporte's financially disastrous period of control.

Figs. 51-54 Four designs by William Grieve from the highly successful ballet of Masaniello, choreographed by Deshayes, produced by Laporte at the King's Theatre, March 24th, 1829, and revived frequently, including performances at Covent Garden during Laporte's tenure. Figs.51 and 52 show the conjunction of back-cloth and/or cut scenes with angled, architectural or natural, set-pieces. The market-place (Fig.53) has one setting which gave ample opportunity for realism. The cave (Fig.54) is the counterpart of the palace. The visual motifs resemble those of melodrama, but, with the narrative carried by pantomime, the music and dancing are freed to convey a more subtle and imaginative message.

Fig.55 Rachel as Phèdre, Delacroix, c.1843. The attribution is convincing, but not firmly documented. The reaction of Sir Theodore Martin, Helen Faucit's husband, to Rachel's Phèdre is of interest. He wrote that there was "something appallingly true and terribly

beautiful in this woman, wasting away by inches with the consuming fire of a passion which she abhorred, but which Venus herself was fanning in her veins with pitiless persistency. It was as real as life itself, but it was reality steeped in the hues of poetry."

Section 7

Fig.56 Bulwer-Lytton's The Lady of Lyons, Act Four, Covent Garden, 1838. This and the following illustrations are from George Scharf, Recollections of the Scenic Effects of Covent Garden Theatre, London, 1839. The artist notes "the inadequacy of outline, however well executed, to convey a complete idea of those scenic effects, whose pictorial characteristics depend as much on the artistic combinations of color in the different objects as on the grouping of the persons". Nevertheless, the work is a most valuable record of the mise-en-scène of fourteen of Macready's productions during the two seasons. The object in Beauseant's right hand is a pistol, and the moment appears to be Beauseant's line, "Dare you thus insult a man of my birth, ruffian?"; Pauline is about to faint in Melnotte's arms. The setting strikes one as almost too spare to fill the Covent Garden stage.

Fig.57 Bulwer Lytton's Richelieu, Act Five scene two, Covent Garden, 1839: the moment of the Cardinal's resignation. The King looks to be on the point of beginning an aria; indeed, the stage-picture strongly.suggests opera.

Fig.58 Hamlet, Act Three scene one, Covent Garden, 1837. It is interesting to compare the stage arrangement and grouping with that of the John Philip Kemble Promptbook (Fig.25), a useful corrective

against over-estimating the extent of Macready's innovations in staging.

Fig.59 Othello, Act One scene three, Covent Garden, 1837. A Council of Forty was, inevitably, interpreted literally. Note the colour indications in Fig.60 - red gowns for the Ten, black gowns for the flanking senators.

Fig.60 Stage plan for Othello, Act One scene three, John Philip Kemble prompt-book.

Fig.61 Stage plan for Othello, Act one scene three, Drury Lane prompt-book, 1843, reproduced in Downer, The Eminent Tragedian.

Fig.62 King Lear, Act Five, Covent Garden, 1838. The soldiers watching Edgar's defeat of Edmund merge with figures painted on the back-cloth.

Fig.63 Henry V, Act One scene one, Covent Garden, 1839. The King received the French ambassadors: the central space awaits the casket of tennis balls. The general resemblance to Fig.58 suggests the prevailing house style of production.

Fig.64 Henry V, Act Three scene one. The siege of Harfleur followed Stanfield's diorama during the third Chorus. The soldiers "quietly looking over the walls" bothered the Spectator's critic, who presumed that their presence, so visually effective, was responsible for the truncating of Henry's speech of exhortation. Similarly, the impressive line-up of weapons was, presumably, a

prepared scene behind the diorama. Once in place, military logic demanded their rapid deployment.

Fig.65 Charles James Mathews and Madame Vestris in Planché's Court Favour, Olympic, 1836. This illustration gives a good impression of the small-scale drawing-room reality which Madame Vestris promoted, and contains indications of the development of the box-set (ceiling cloth, angled side pieces). See George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre, p.xiii.

Section 8

Fig.66 Fantômes, a lithograph by Louis Boulanger, 1829, in illustration of Hugo's poem. This, like the poem itself, may be a source for the nightmare vision that the artist has of his beloved in the fifth movement of Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique.

Fig.67 The programme of Berlioz's Grand Concert Dramatique on December 9th, 1832, at the Conservatoire. In addition, a detailed programme of the Symphonie fantastique was distributed in the concert-room. Bocage read, rather than impersonated, the part of the artist. There remains an important dramatic element in the form and content of the concert.

Fig.68 The title page of the first edition of the version for soprano or tenor of La Mort D'Ophélie, 1848. The portrait of Ophelia has iconographical connections with contemporary English stage practice.

Fig.69 Set design for the ballet Miranda, William Grieve, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1838.

Fig.70 Set design for the ballet La Esmeralda, William Grieve, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1844. This sketch seems to relate to the lithograph below on scene three (Fig.71).

Fig.71 Jules Perrot as Pierre Gringoire and Carlotta Grisi as Esmeralda, La Esmeralda, scene two. The location is Esmeralda's lodging. The contrast between the dancer's pose and the mundane physical details of the setting is a striking example of the fusion of the theatrical and the natural in ballet.

Fig.72 La Esmeralda, scene three, lithograph from a drawing by J. Brandard. Adelaide Frassi (left, Fleur-de-Lys); Arthur Saint-Léon (Phoebus); and Carlotta Grisi (right centre, Esmeralda).

Fig.73 Giselle, Act One: the death of Giselle (Paris Opéra, 1841). Libretto by Gautier and Saint-Georges, choreography by Coralli and (unofficially) Perrot.

Fig.74 Giselle, Act Two: Giselle descending into the bed of flowers.

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Spectator

The Times

L'Artiste

Le Constitutionnel

Le Corsaire

Le Courrier des Théâtres

Le Courrier Français

Le Figaro

Le Globe

Le Journal de la Belgique

Le Journal de Paris

Le Journal des Débats

Le Mercure de France au dix-neuvième Siècle

La Pandore

La Presse

La Quotidienne

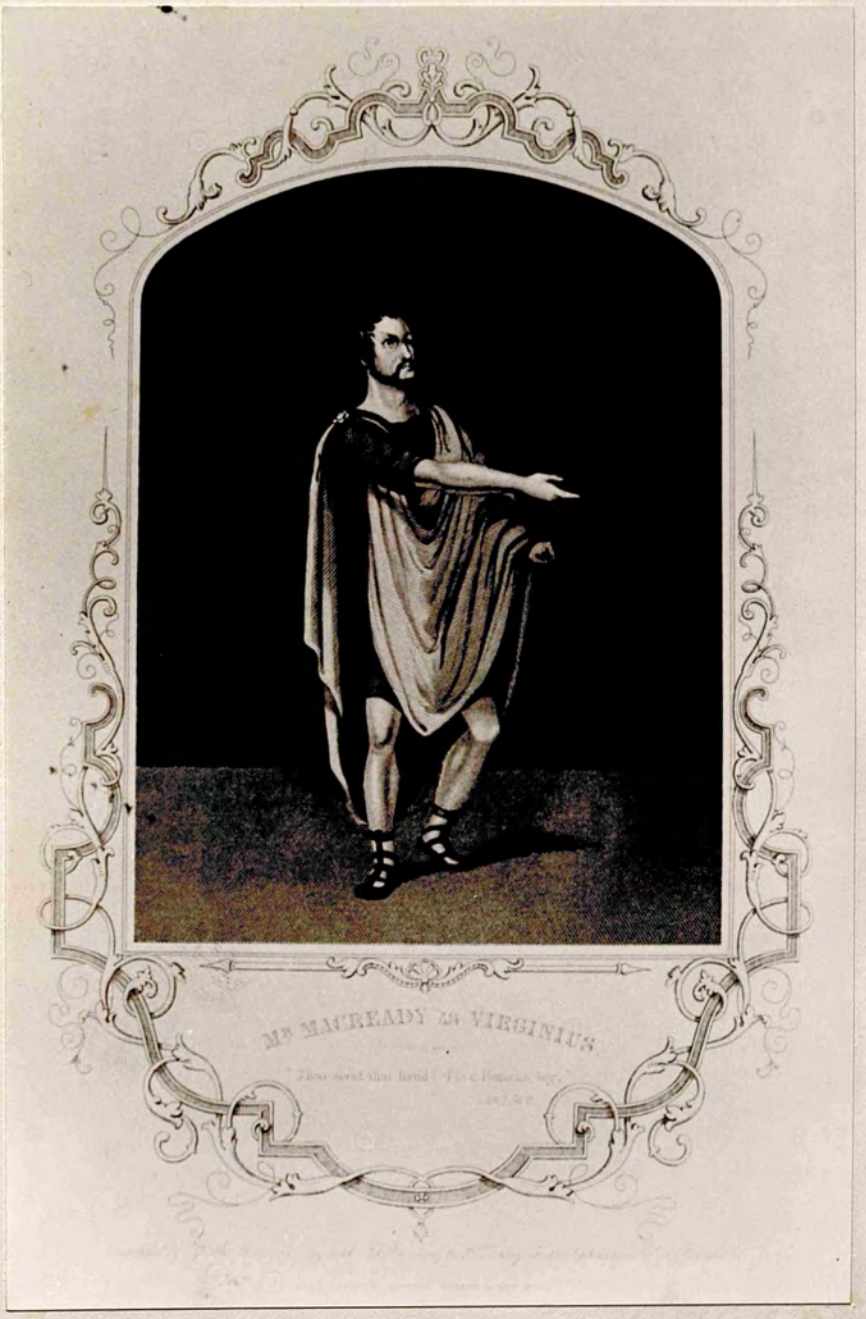
MISS KELLY, as ANNETTE, in the PLACE & MA WIFE

2.

Mr KEAN As OTHELLO.

Published by M.& M.SKELT 11 Swan St Minories London

3



MR MACREADY AS VIRGINIUS

4

Othello

1st Dress.

5

Cafsio

6

Desdemona

7

8

9

10

11

12

N°. 573.

Costumes de Mme Allan DORVAL rôle de CÉCILIA et de COOK, rôle du MONSTRE, dans la pièce de ce nom, drame

Théâtre de la Porte St. Martin.

Chez Basilevaire Martinet, libraire, rue du Coq N°. 13 et 15, à Paris.

Salmon f.

Songez à notre serments..... Adieu !

Acte 1er. Scène XII.

13

Costumes de Frédéric LEMAITRE, rôle de MÉPHISTOPHÉLÈS et de Mme ZÉLIE-PAUL, rôle de MARTHA, dans Faust. Drame. N° 637.

Scène de la Walse.

14

A.D.

Panorama Dramatique.

BERTRAM.

Décoration du 1er Acte.

15

Talma as Néron in *Britannicus*
A portrait by Delacroix

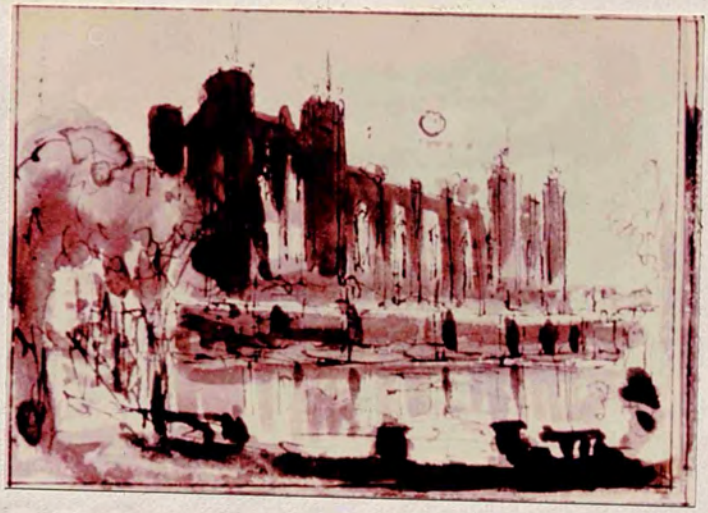
16

FRÉDÉRICK AS ROBERT MACAIRE
Lithograph by Langlumé

17

18

19



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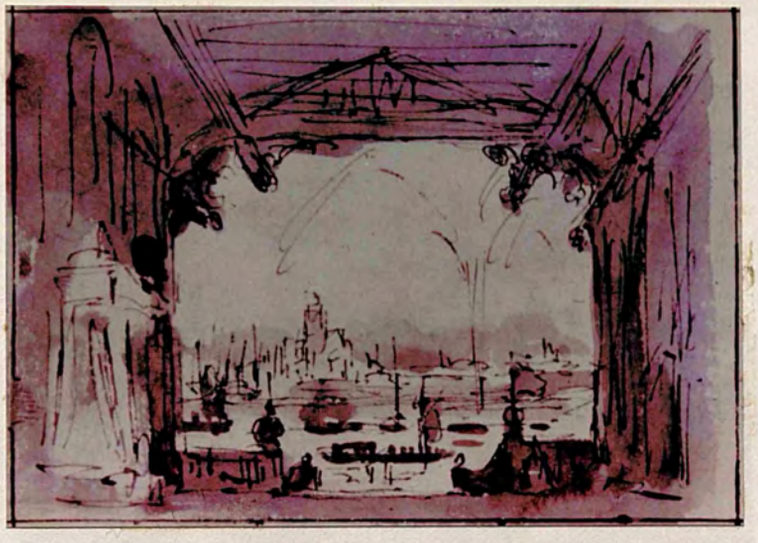

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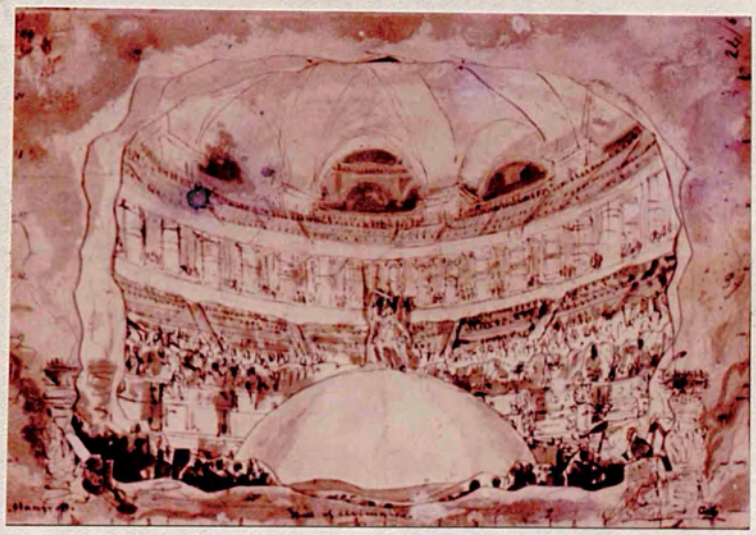

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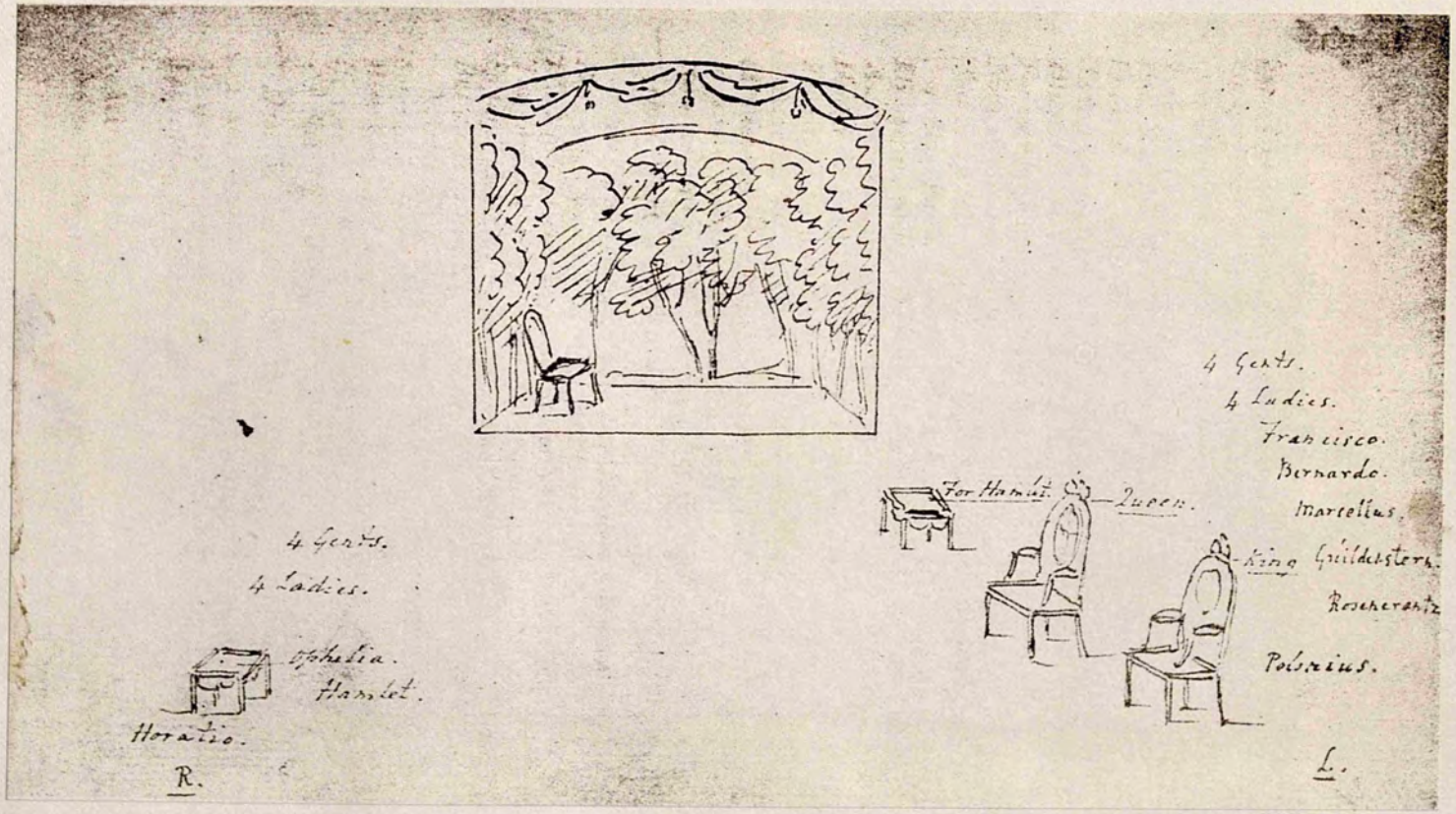

4 Gents.
4 Ladies.
Ophelia.
Hamlet.
Horatio.
R.
For Hamlet.
Queen.
King
4 Gents.
4 Ladies.
Francisco.
Bernardo.
Marcellus.
Guildenstern.
Rosencrantz
Polonius.
L.

26

27

Devéria et Boulanger del.

Shakspeare **Hamlet.** Acte 3. Scene 2.

28

29

THÉÂTRE ANGLAIS

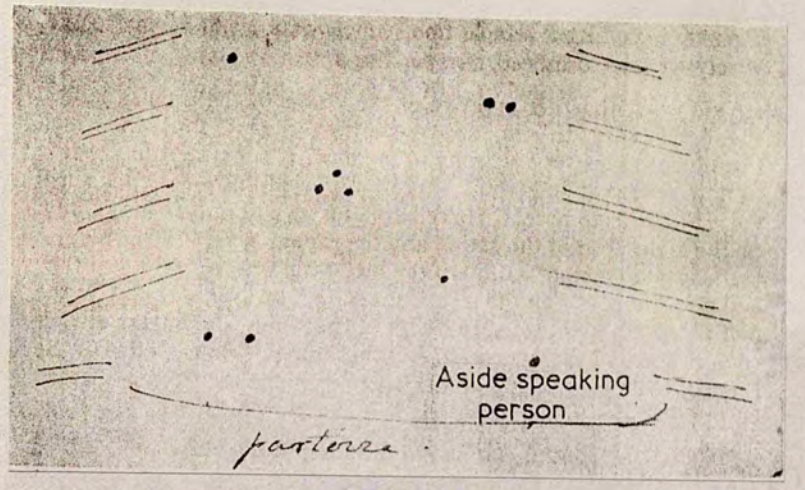
Hamlet

30

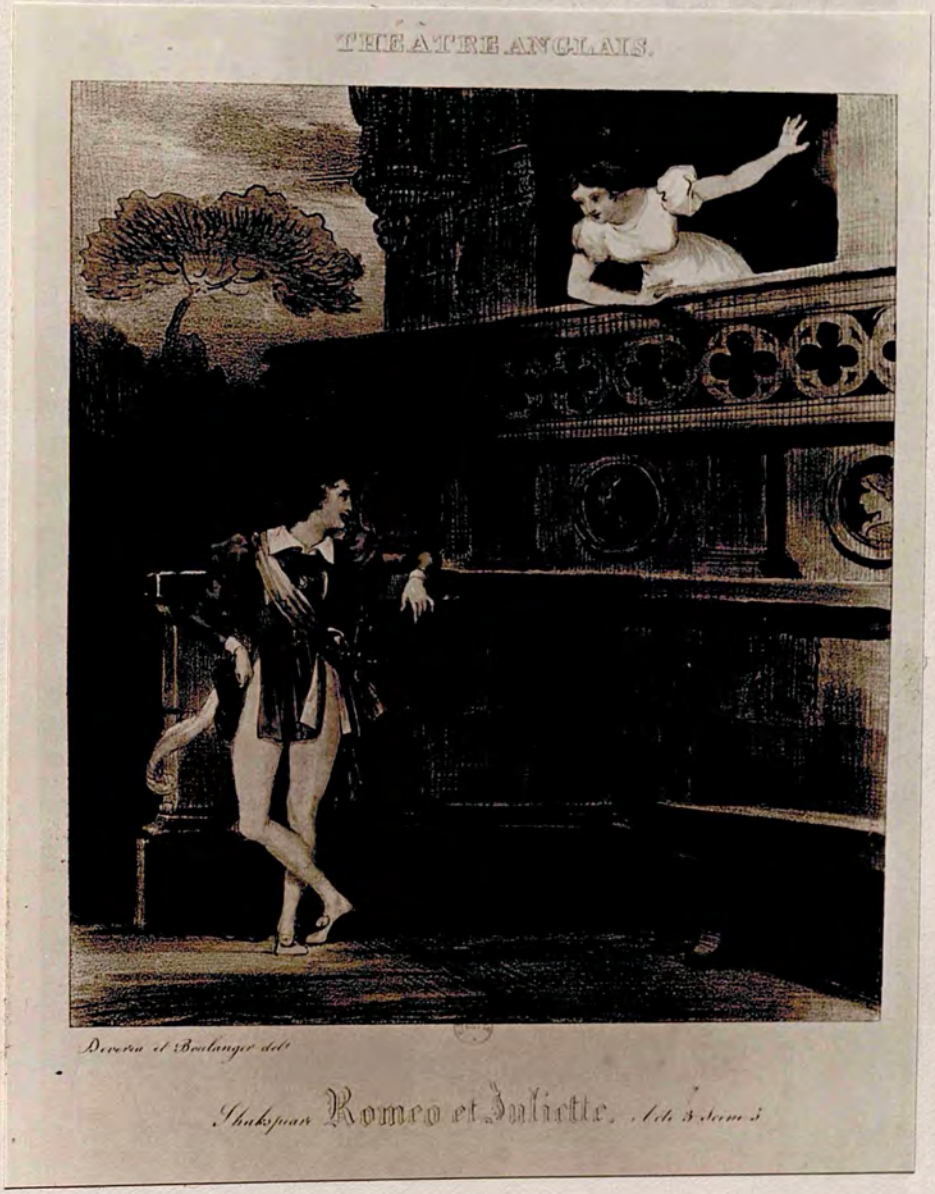
31


Théâtre Anglais à Paris.
I cannot choose but weep, to think,
they should lay him in the cold ground.
Mlle SMITHSON, Rôle d'Offélia dans Hamlet.

32


Aside speaking
person
parterre

33


THEÂTRE ANGLAIS.
Devéria et Boulanger del.
Shakspear Romeo et Juliette. Acte 3 Scene 3

34

THEATRE ANGLAIS.

Devéria et Boulanger dessinateurs

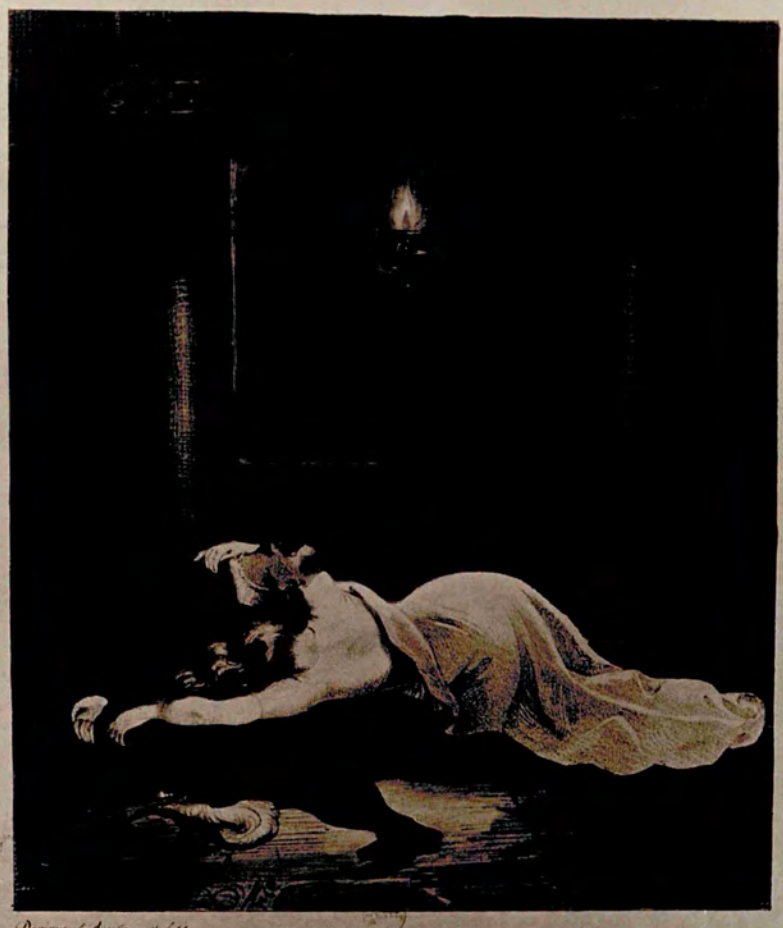
Shakspeare **Romeo et Juliette.** *Acte 2 Scene 6*

35

Shakespeare Roméo et Juliette Acte 3 Scène 3

36

THÉÂTRE ANGLAIS.



Devéria et Boulanger del.

Shakspeare Roméo et Juliette. Acte 3 scène dernière

37

38

Théâtre Anglais à Paris.

Not dead? not yet quite dead?
I, that am cruel, am yet merciful;
I Would not have thee linger in thy pain.

M.r C. KEMBLE, Rôle d'Othello.

39


Théâtre Anglais à Paris N.4
R.ts de Valmont
She is indeed, perfection
Mr. ABBOTT, Rôle de Cassio.

40

THEATRE ANGLAIS.

Devéria et Boulanger dirt

Shakspeare — Othello Acte 3 Scene 3

41


THEATRE ANGLAIS.
Drawn et Boulanger del.
Jane Shore. Acte 3 Scene 3

42

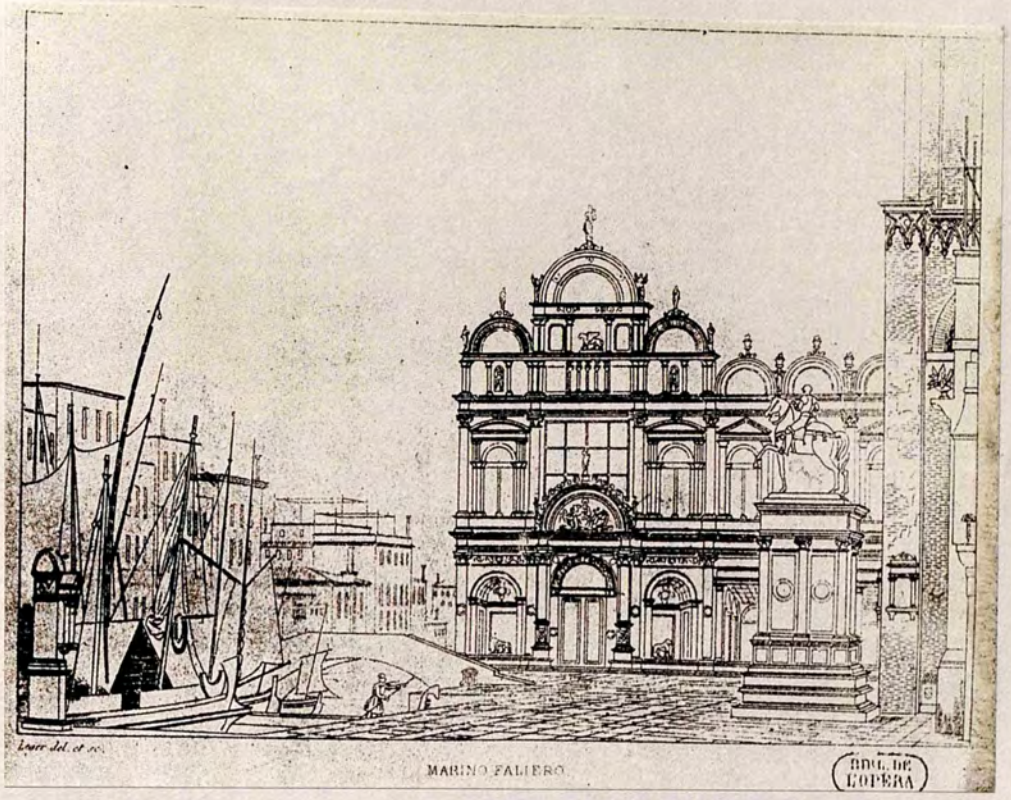
Costume de Mlle MARS, rôle de la Duchesse DE GUISE, dans Henri III et sa Cour. Drame historique. N°. 642

Th. Français.

Chez Martinet, Libraire, rue du Coq St. Honoré à Paris. Malapeau.

Oui...oui ...vous m'aimez.....oh! depuis long-temps, je m'en suis aperçue....

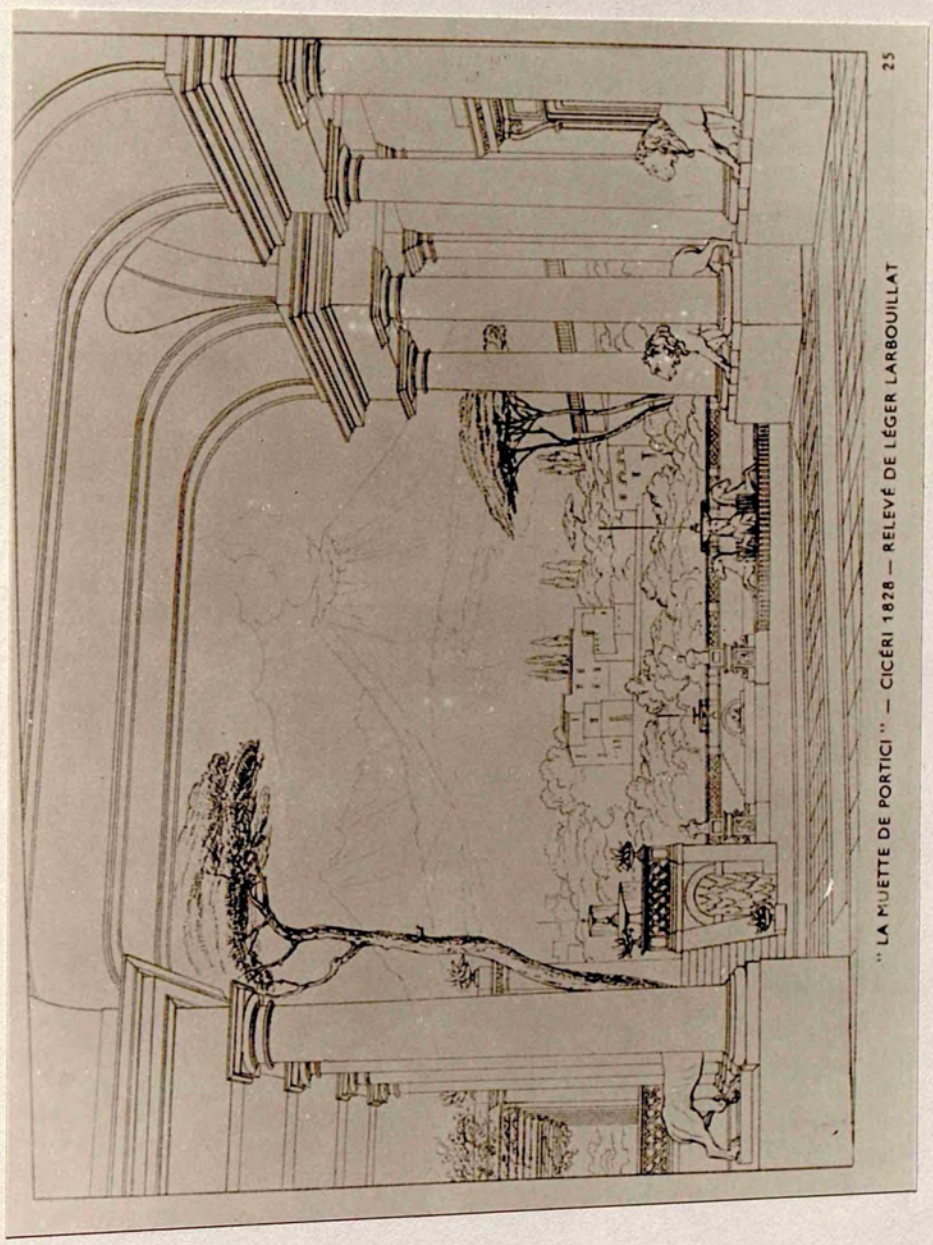
43



MARINO FALIERO

44

45



" LA MUETTE DE PORTICI " — CICÉRI 1828 — RELEVÉ DE LÉGER LARBOUILLAT 25

46

47

48

Mme DORVAL

Comédie Française

49

Costume de Mlle MARS, rôle de CÉLIMÈNE, dans le Misantrope Comédie. N.o 119

Th. Français.

(Costume tel qu'il a été représenté à Versailles)

Chez Hautecoeur-Martinet, Editeur, rue du Cog, N.o 15, à Paris.

50

51

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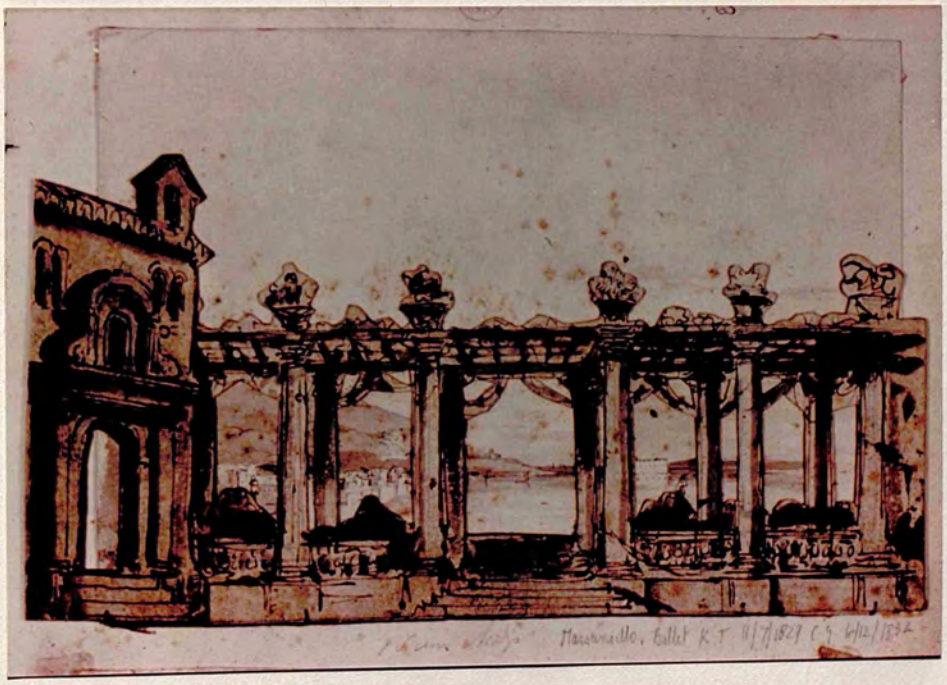

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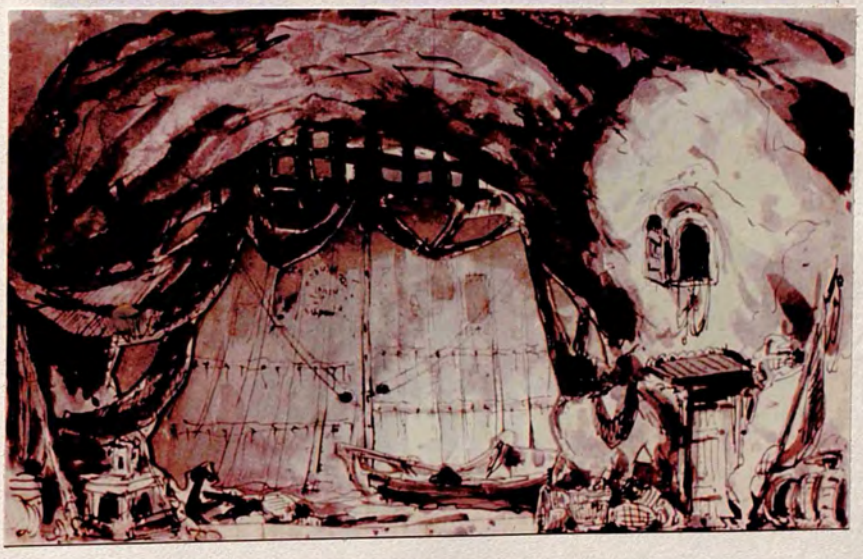

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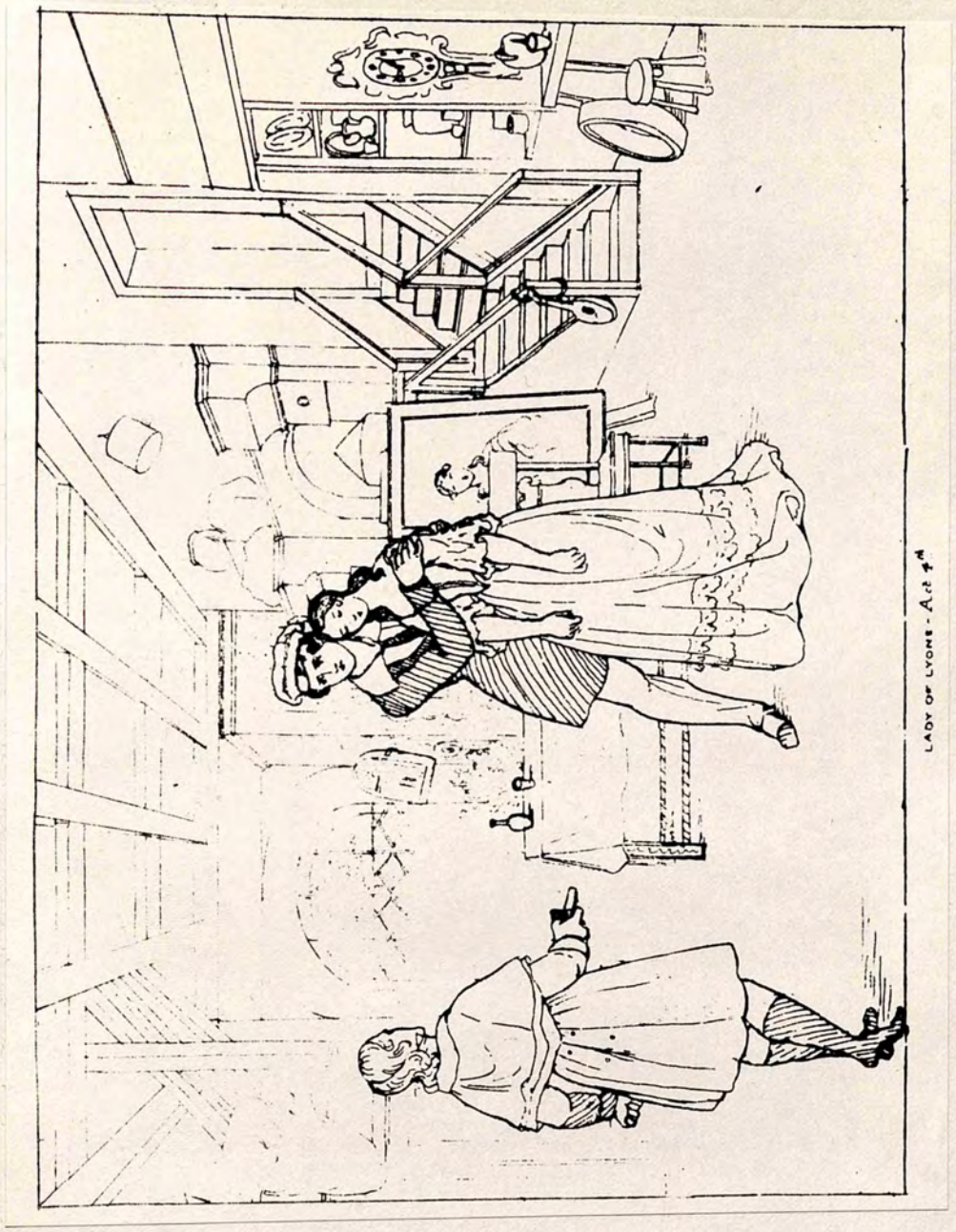

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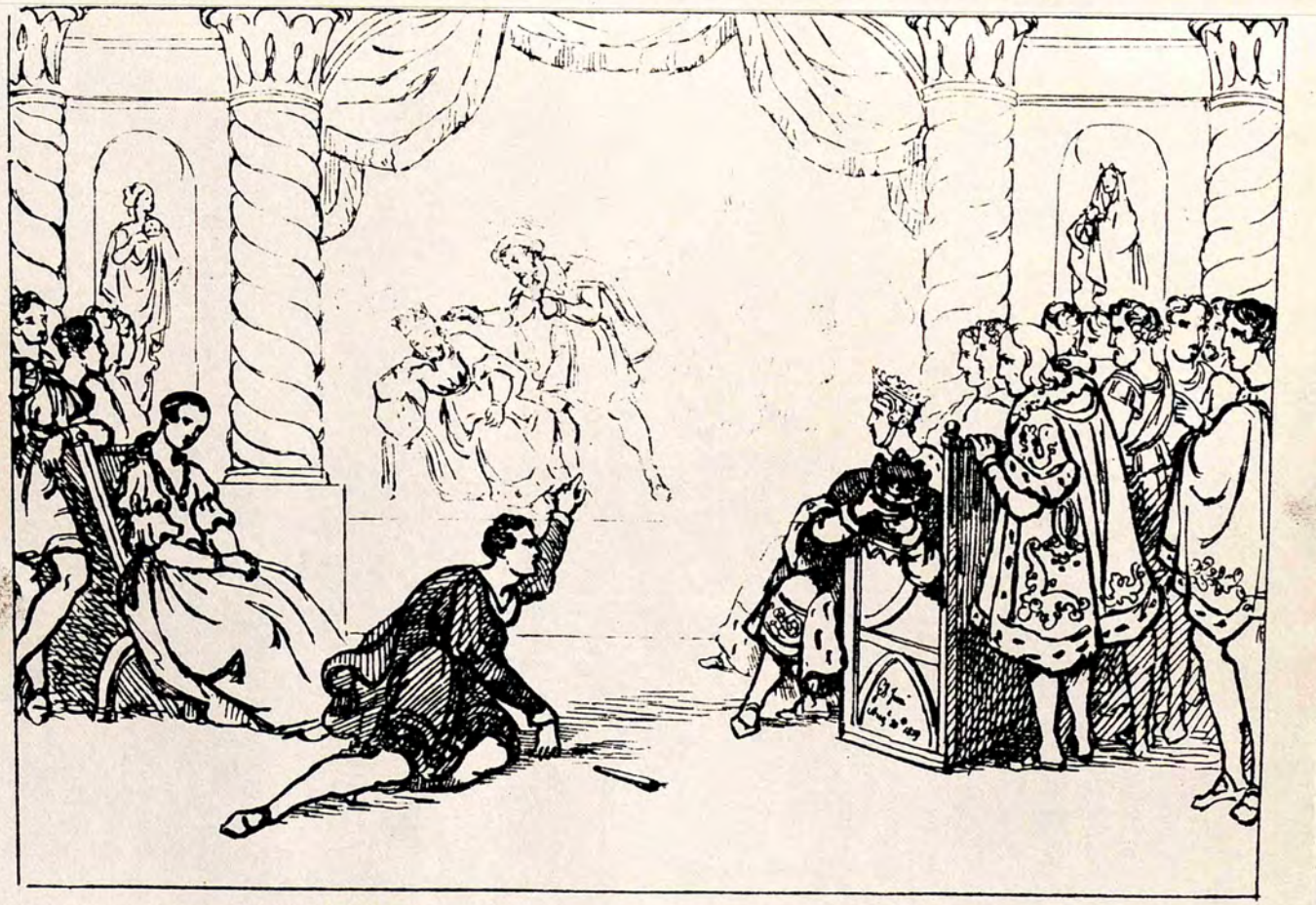
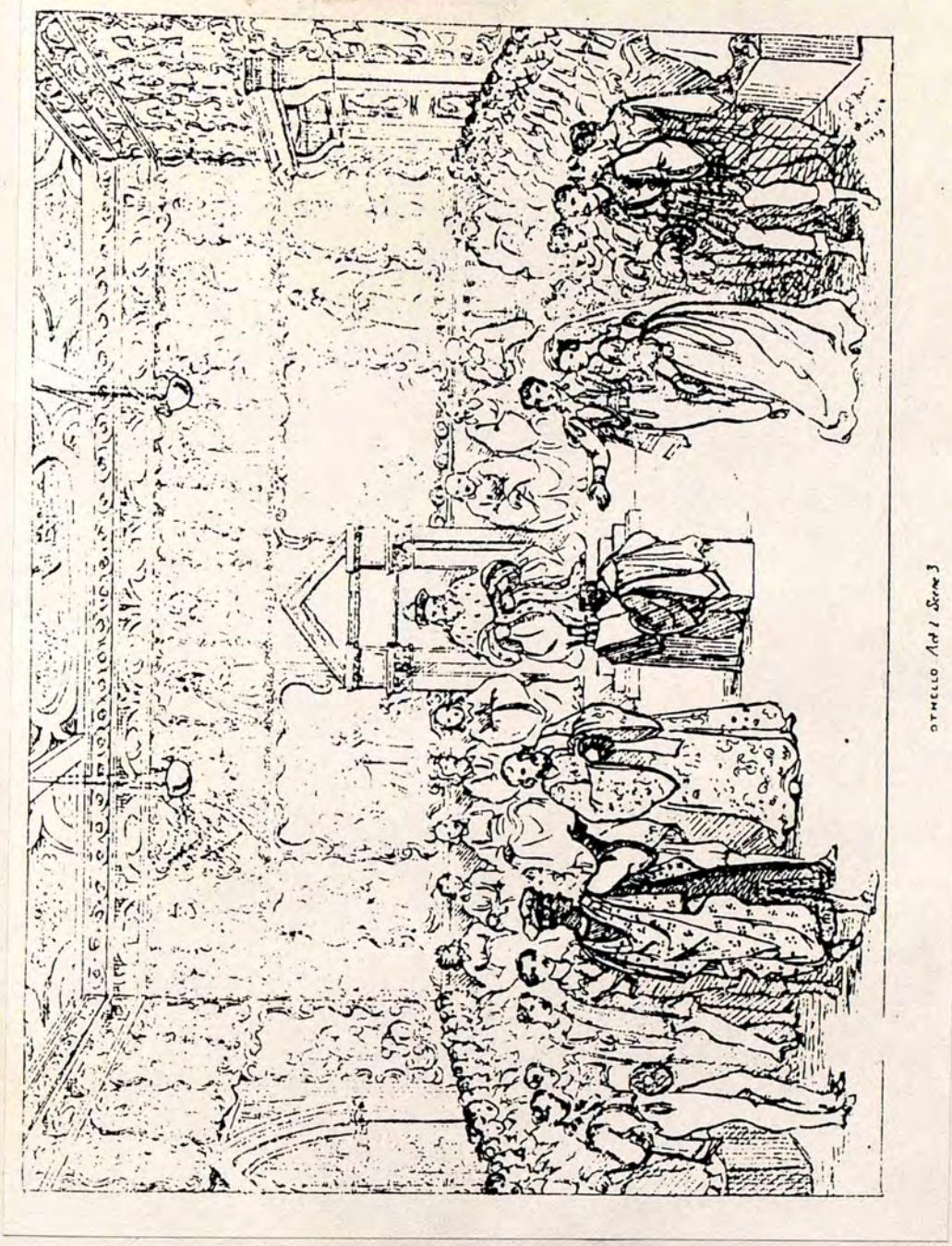
RICHELIEU Act 5th Scene 2nd



HAMLET. Act 3. Scene I

59



OTHELLO Act I Scene 3

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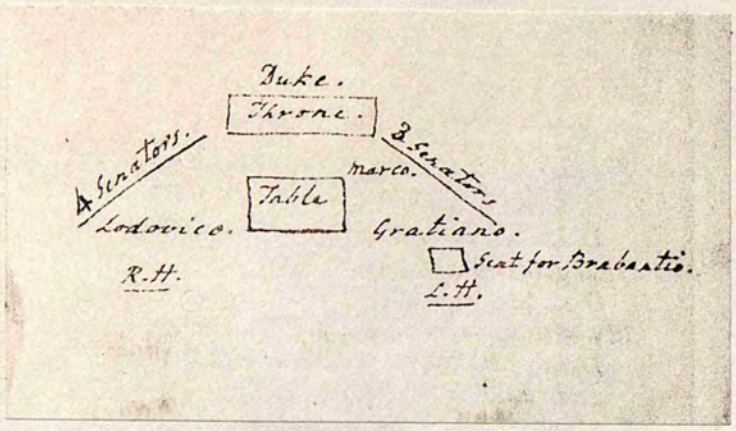

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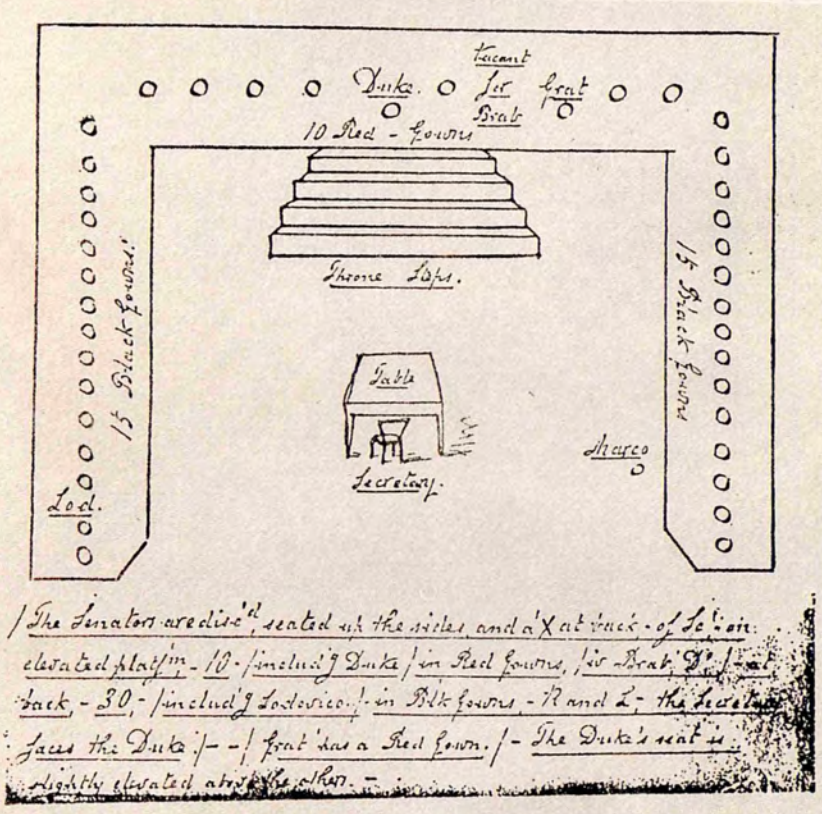

/The Senators are dis'd, seated at the sides, and a'X at back - of Sc: on elevated platform - 10 - /includ'g Duke / in Red Gowns, / in Brab: Sen.: / at back - 30 - /includ'g Lodovico / - in Blk Gowns - R and L - the Secretary faces the Duke /- - / Brab: has a Red Gown. /- The Duke's seat is slightly elevated above the others. -

Stage plan for *Othello*, 1843

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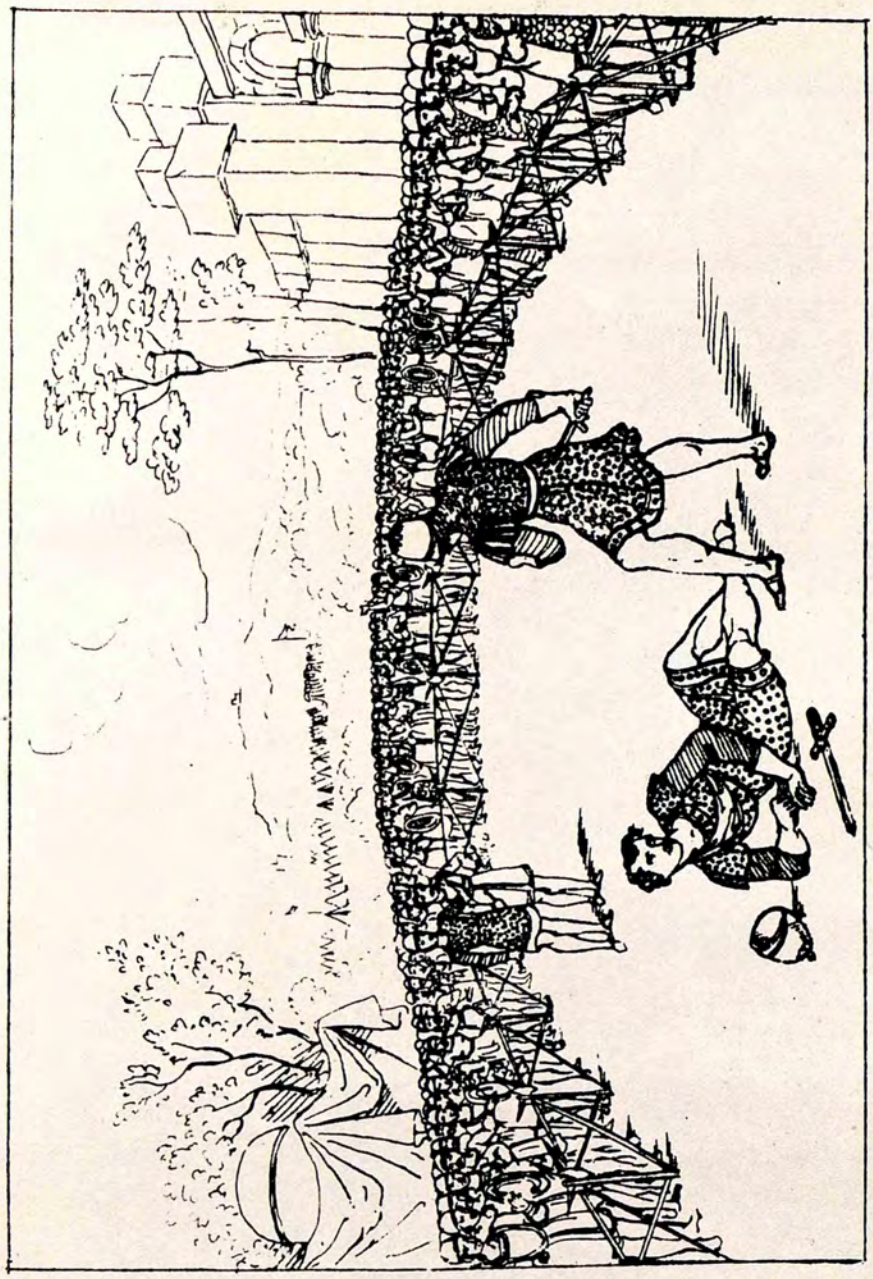

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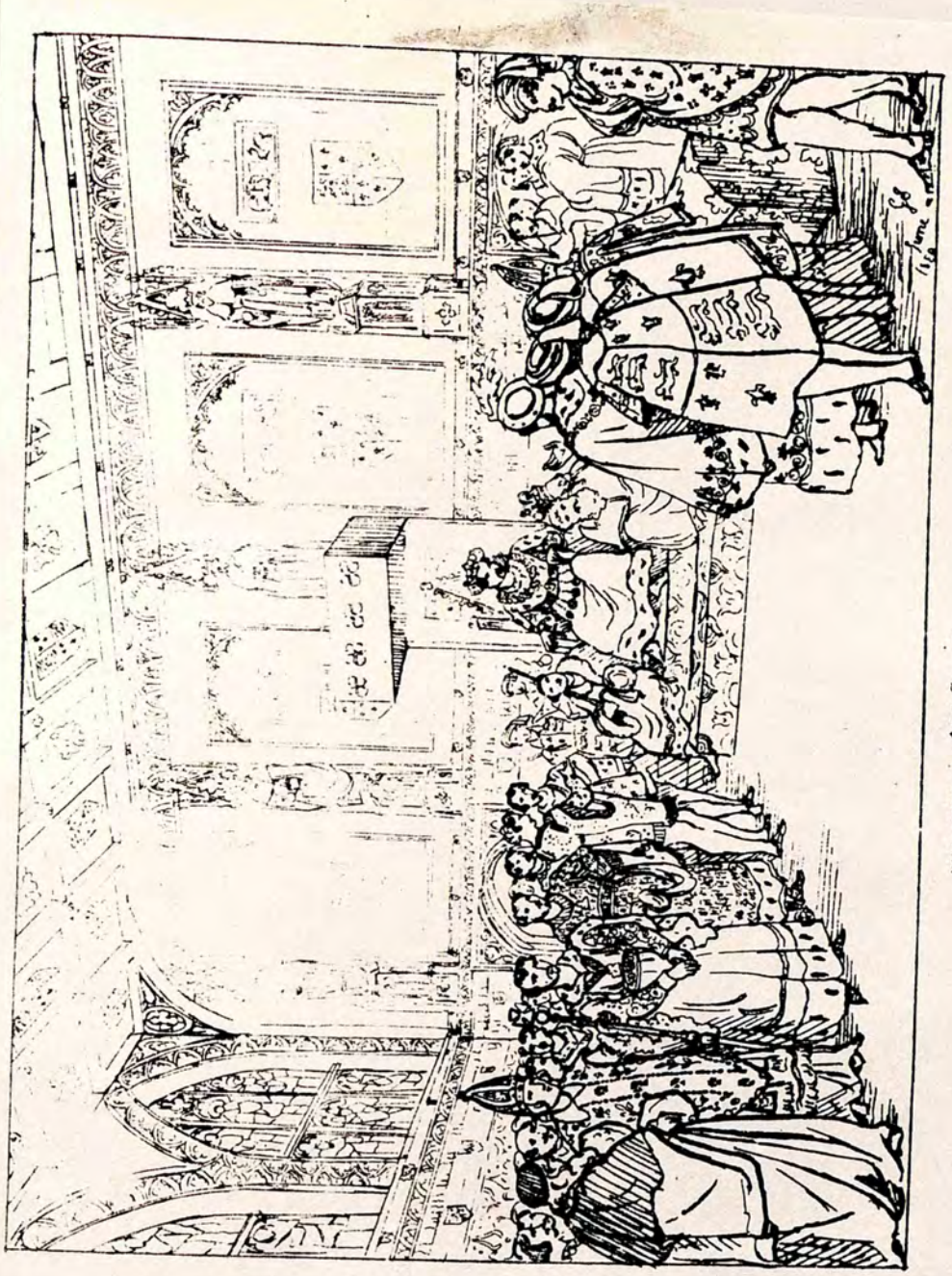

KING HENRY V. Act I. Scene I.

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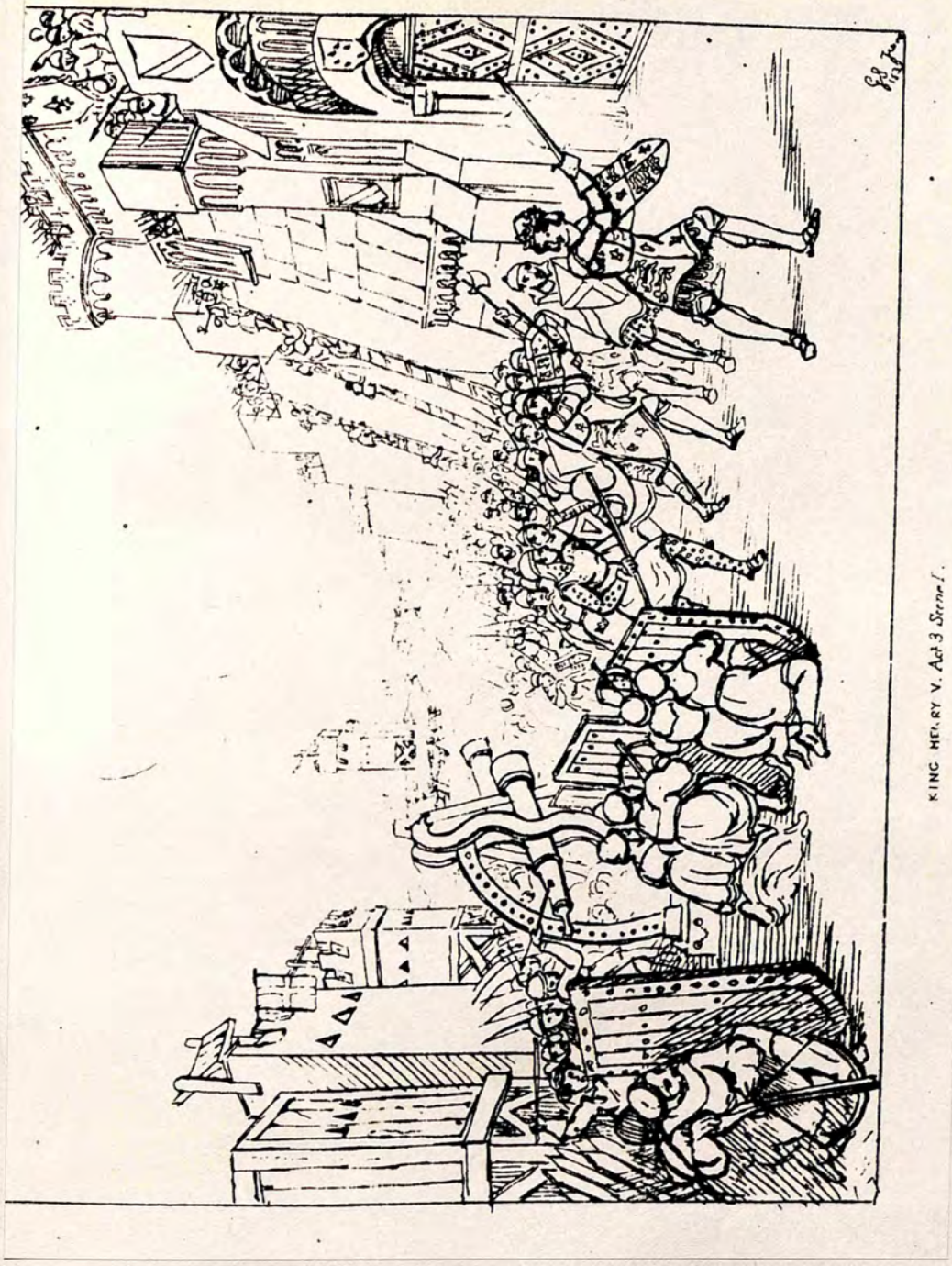

KING HENRY V. Act 3 Scene 1.

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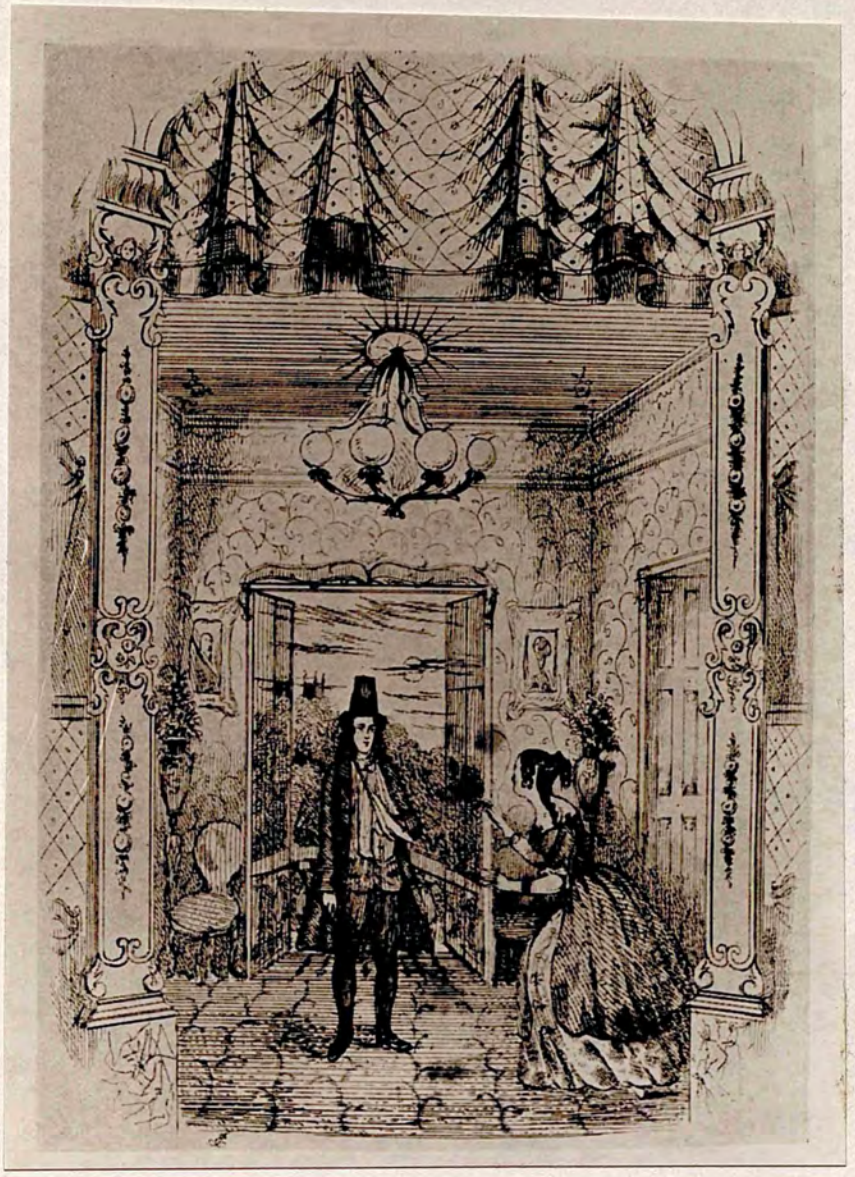

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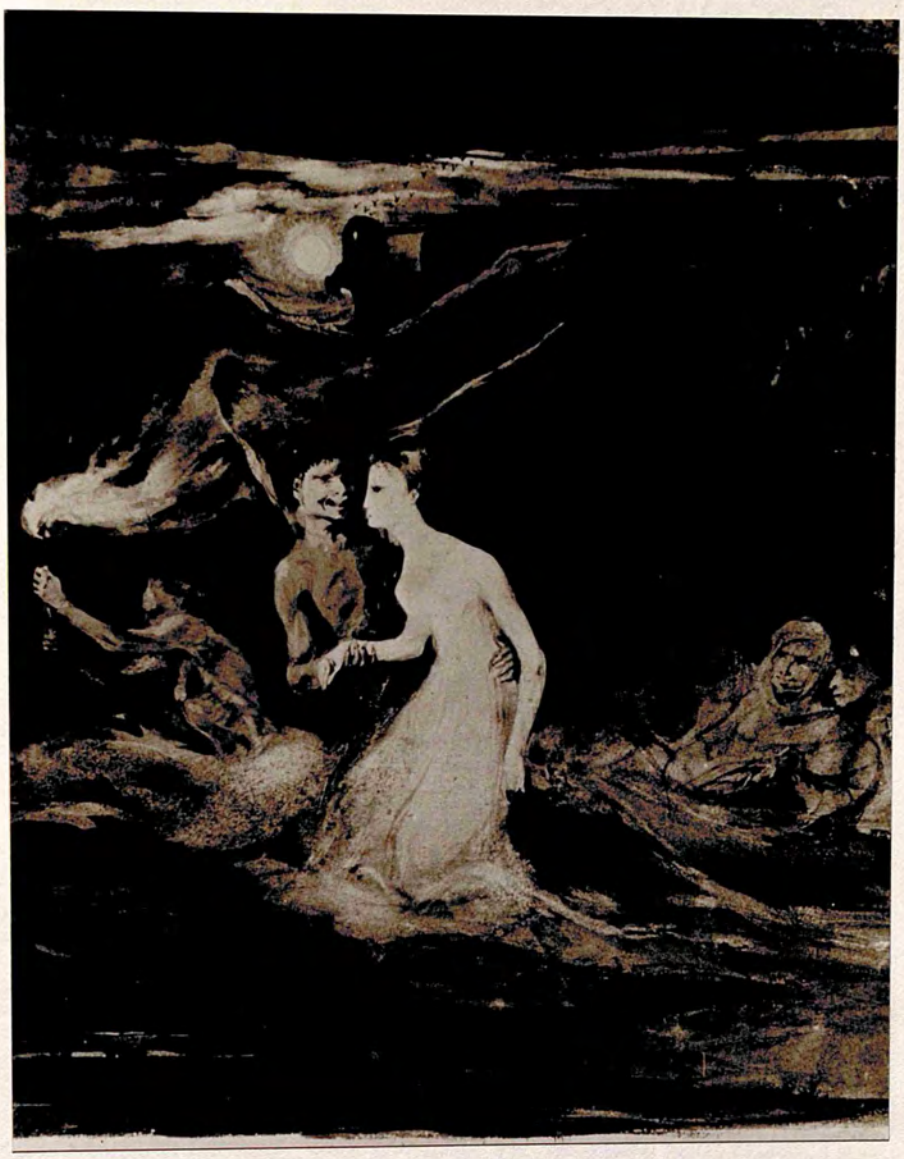

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GRANDE SALLE DU CONSERVATOIRE DE MUSIQUE.

Dimanche 9 Décembre 1832, à une heure précise,

GRAND

CONCERT DRAMATIQUE,

Donné par M. Hector Berlioz.

PROGRAMME.

ÉPISODE DE LA VIE D'UN ARTISTE, Symphonie fantastique, en cinq parties (1), de M. *H. Berlioz*.

1re. *RÉVERIES. — PASSIONS.*

2me. *UN BAL.*

3me. *SCÈNE AUX CHAMPS.*

4me. *MARCHE DU SUPPLICE.*

5me. *SONGE D'UNE NUIT DU SABBAT.*
Messe funèbre burlesque.
Ronde du Sabbat.
Dies iræ et ronde du Sabbat réunis.

(1) Un programme détaillé de la Symphonie sera distribué dans la salle.

LE RETOUR A LA VIE.

MÉLOLOGUE, (mélange de musique et de discours) EN SIX PARTIES, faisant suite à la Symphonie fantastique; paroles et musique de M. *H. Berlioz*. Le rôle parlé de l'artiste sera lu par M. BOCCAGE.

1re. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
LE PÊCHEUR, Ballade imitée de *Goëthe*, chantée, avec Piano seul, par M. A. DUPONT.

2me. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
CHOEUR D'OMBRES (avec Orchestre).

3me. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
SCÈNE DE LA VIE DE BRIGAND. Chant, Chœur et Orchestre; le capitaine, chanté par M. HÉBERT.

4me. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
CHANT DE BONHEUR (avec Orchestre et Harpe), chanté par M. A. DUPONT.

5me. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
LES DERNIERS SOUPIRS DE LA HARPE. Souvenirs (Orchestre seul).

6me. MONOLOGUE DE L'ARTISTE.
FANTAISIE SUR LA TEMPÊTE, (Drame de *Shakespeare*) pour Chœur et Orchestre.

L'Orchestre, composé de plus de 100 MUSICIENS, sera dirigé par M. HABENECK.

Le Piano sera tenu par M. FESSY.

PRIX DES PLACES : Balcon, Stalles et Premières, 6 fr. — Secondes et Rez-de-Chaussée, 5 fr. — Parterre, 3 fr. — Amphithéâtre, 2 fr.

On trouve des Billets chez M. Réty, *au Conservatoire*; M. Schlesinger, *rue de Richelieu, n°. 97*; M. Pleyel, *boulevart Montmartre*; MM. Lemoine, *rue de l'Échelle*; M. Messonnier, *rue Dauphine*; M. Frey, *place des Victoires*.

LA SALLE SERA ÉCLAIRÉE.

VINCHON, fils et successeur de Mme. Ve. BALLARD
Imprimeur, rue J.-J.-Rousseau, No. 8.

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À MADAME LA COMTESSE D'AGOULT

LA MORT D'OPHÉLIE

Ballade, imitée de Shakespeare par E. Legouvé.

MUSIQUE DE

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Prix : 5f

à Paris, chez Richault, Boulevart Poissonnière, 26, au 1er

Berlin : Schlesinger

London : Beale

DU MÊME AUTEUR.

Le Captive	Chant de Bonheur
Le Pêcheur	Scène des Brigands

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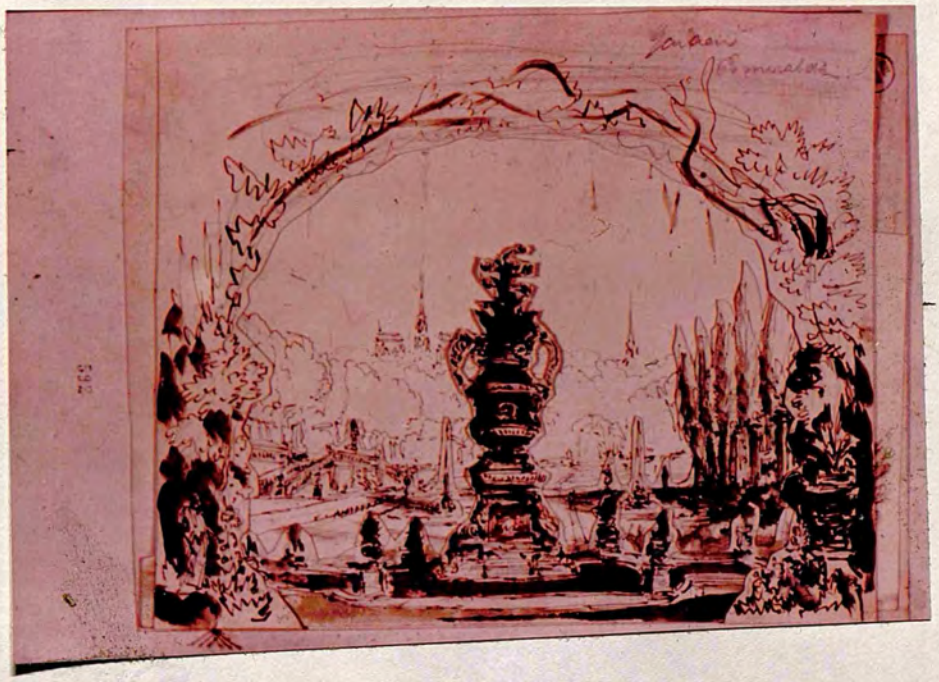

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